



Serco service aids island education

“ All our schools get very good results and overall the island’s results benchmark very favourably with the UK. However we are not complacent and are always looking to improve the quality of teaching and learning for all our pupils. ”

Bob Bassford, ICT Project Manager
Jersey LEA

Schools in Jersey have been using Facility as their information management system for five years but they have also taken advantage of the additional help available through Serco’s consultancy service to provide all-round support for their education system.

The result is that schools across the island have found different ways to tighten standards in behaviour, attendance and attainment as well as better data handling and information exchange.

Jersey’s education system

The island takes a unique approach to organising education. Its 25 primary schools are very similar to mainland UK but at secondary level it becomes more complex. The island’s nine secondary schools include two private Catholic schools and two fee-paying schools that are also supported by the States of Jersey. At the remaining secondaries the system is similar to the mainland until the age of 14, when the most able students are transferred to a 14-19 establishment, which they attend through to A level.

ICT Project Manager Bob Bassford said: "It is a system peculiar to Jersey but all our schools get very good results and overall the island's results benchmark very favourably with the UK. However we are not complacent and are always looking to improve the quality of teaching and learning for all our pupils."

Saving time

All but one of Jersey's schools use Facility, making data handling across the island potentially very simple. The island's strict computer security rules occasionally create a barrier but on the whole gathering information has become much easier.

Planning and project manager Jim Westwater is responsible for handling the island's education statistics. He said: "The biggest single improvement we have seen is the transfer of data between primary and secondary schools but it also helps with getting information to me. I can get the information that I want in a standard form, saving a huge amount of time because I don't have to clean and prepare the data. It also cuts down on the frustration because it is more accurate."

Handling primary school admissions through Facility saves around two working days compared with previous systems. "And that is just one process. I do several exercises that save me time the same way." He has direct access to secondary school databases so he can extract information when he needs it without having to ask their office staff, so schools' time is saved as well.

Sharing information

Others who save time are the Education Welfare Officers. Because every school uses Facility to record attendance EWOs can log in through ePortal to check on individuals. Brenda Cochrane has found the service invaluable in her role monitoring secondary school students. "I can view the whole story about a child so I can look for patterns. This is helping to identify problems much earlier. We can work with children with attendance difficulties and make interventions early, before the habits form."

Although schools have been given the same Facility options they choose to use it in different ways. At Jersey College for Girls various old paper systems have been replaced on-line. Office Manager Jane Bisson said: "We used to have a 'sick book' where we recorded any medical information or sickness but it was impossible to spot patterns with it. Thanks to Facility we recently noticed that one girl was having regular

headaches so we told her parents, who took her to the doctor. When the doctor asked about frequency and timing we could supply all the details by printing off a report."

Giving credit for success

The college's merits system used to take two to three weeks to administer to ensure each girl's successes were accurately recorded. Now merits are recorded when they happen and the school exports data directly onto certificates. The longest job is when the head has to sign them. Across the road at Victoria College boys can earn house points for academic performance and excellent behaviour. Before Facility the system was carried out on paper. "It used to cause a lot of discussion because the boys are so competitive. Now it is easier to manage because it is recorded through ePortal and it can be checked easily," said Assistant Headteacher Andy Adkin.

Victoria College also uses the system to manage its attendance. "We don't have much trouble with absenteeism but it has had an enormous impact on the lates," Andy added. The school has form time after lunch in order to start teaching first thing in the morning so it is important that the boys are there on time.

Consultancy works

At one of the island's 11-16 schools, Grainville, staff make use of Facility to record events. One of the changes it has made is to alter the emphasis on what is recorded. Deputy Headteacher Dave Cahill explained staff used to record events individually and then they needed to be transferred to students' files. Now templates have been set up in Facility showing a series of standards more connected with learning, aiming to promote that students should be ready to learn when they arrive at lessons. Registration has switched to the end of the day so that form teachers can see and deal with events immediately. "That supports us in co-ordinating what we are doing. It helps us to deliver the best education to the students."

The school has also taken advantage of Serco's consultancy sessions. These have proved so useful that Dave has arranged further visits. "It has been incredibly useful. They are like mini inspections but working with us, not against us. It is a developmental tool, not a judgemental tool." Consultants have looked at particular subjects as well as management practices. "We may think we are doing well but it is good to have an independent pair of eyes to look at our situation. It is comforting when you get that reassurance. It helps put staff at ease."



whole school improvement

Le Rocquier School uses Facility to drive its attainment targets

They have also linked Grainville with schools in England to share good practice. "It's been very valuable because on an island we're restricted on interaction. We have just a few secondary schools but on the mainland you might have links with 50 or 60. The consultants, with their wide experience have passed on their expertise and saved us a lot of research time in learning from good practice elsewhere."

Better performance

At Les Quennevais School staff have found that attendance has improved since introducing ePortal a year ago. Direct input of data has allowed Jo Harris, their attendance officer, to check on absentees and take immediate action. The next stage will be to introduce SMS text messaging so parents and guardians will be informed automatically if their children are missing.

Progress grades are now generated each term and converted into a measure of how well students are meeting expectations. Facility Coordinator Peter Galloway is currently trialling home access through ePortal with a view to offering it to all teachers. He finds the system particularly useful to exchange data when pupils transfer from primary school and when the more able students transfer away at 14.

Le Rocquier School uses Facility to drive its attainment targets. The school recently underwent a complete rebuild and as part of the improvements more than 400 computers were installed as well as interactive whiteboards and projectors. "We are at the cutting edge of ICT," explained Deputy Headteacher John McGuinness. "In a bid to make best use of the new equipment three staff have been appointed as

champions to look at various aspects of computers in education including video streaming and creating a student learning zone.

Students' progress is carefully monitored and Facility is used to create a thorough and accountable review of standards. As well as tracking current achievement, the school uses past grades to set realistic, but challenging targets. "Unless standards of attainment are fully understood and progress regularly checked in KS3, you will run the risk of students on a 'journey of self satisfaction', doing only enough to get on, never really achieving their full potential. At Le Rocquier we insist that everyone makes progress but we accept that it will be at different rates for different children." John said.

In addition Le Rocquier has set up a Commitment for Learning Index that ignores attainment but takes account of effort and behaviour. When the grades are calculated they are ranked so parents can see how prepared their children are to learn compared with others in the school.

Primary schools

Jersey's primary schools are also benefiting from using Facility. Rouge Bouillon is the largest primary on the island with 500 pupils including a nursery class. Headteacher James Speight explained that the system was proving to be a one-stop shop for all data including attendance and lateness, unauthorised absences and information for Education Welfare Officers as well as assessments. Letters to parents, whether for good or bad news, are personalised in a word processor but accurate reports from Facility are included and the fact that a letter was sent is included on the child's record.

"Staff can see the details if they open up individual records. Then it all goes on to the secondary school when the child moves on, so the information is available at the new school," he said.

First Tower School is smaller but it also uses Facility to manage all its routine data. It is home to island-wide provision for children with special educational needs under the age of five so access by EWOs is important. Deputy Head Dave Hayward said: "The EWOs use it frequently to view specific children. It saves a lot of time because they can check whether they are in and what reasons were given for absence without asking the office."

Counteracting lateness

Another area where Facility proves worthwhile is in tackling lateness. There is little problem with attendance at the village school in St John's but its rural catchment area was proving a challenge for timekeeping and children were sometimes late. Class teachers tackled the problem at parent consultation evenings. Staff explained the importance of being on time and printed pie charts directly from Facility to give to parents whose children were often late.

"It was very powerful. A teacher can talk but words sometimes are not enough. Handing over a piece of paper to the parents really made a difference," Pam said. One family whose two children had been late 20 times since September were actually early for the whole of the second half of the Spring term following the meeting.



"Words sometimes are not enough. Handing over a piece of paper to the parents really made a difference."

Pam Pitman, Headteacher St John's School