



Integrated children's services with Facility

“ For the first time we are able to look at the data in detail and we have discovered some interesting things. We are using the data to track and identify children who are not on target and draw up actions plan for those children who are borderline.”

Jason Millington, Assessment Co-ordinator
Brookside Primary School and Nursery Centre

As a Beacon authority for integrated children's services The Borough of Telford and Wrekin Council is leading the way in ensuring that children have the best possible opportunities in life and the widest range of available support.

One of only four authorities in the UK to gain Beacon status for Integrated Children's Services, it was already recognised as delivering innovative and groundbreaking schemes to ensure that all children's services departments work together.

To enable closer sharing of information and data the authority has installed Facility as its school management system and operates it centrally in order to provide a consistent service to everyone. The approach has a number of advantages, not least of which is that all schools can use their data in the same way, so it can be shared easily and distributed to other services.

Information Systems Manager Tim Rocke said: "The vast majority of information about children is held in schools but we wanted to remove that silo. Firstly by taking data out of the school office and making it available to teachers, then sharing it through the local authority and eventually within the broader children's services context and our partner agencies."

Having Facility in place has also enabled the borough to operate better when its role is in place of parents. Social workers and children's home staff can have access to school records through ePortal, Facility's interface. Tim explained: "It is not always possible for an authority to have a clear picture of what's happening to its looked-after children on a day to day basis. But to improve this, in the two children's homes we run, we've set up links through ePortal and staff can now log on to check how things are going at school."

The holistic policy is reflected in the borough's approach to information management in schools. Tim said: "We feel there should be no distinction between management functions and curriculum matters because if something isn't aimed at school improvement it shouldn't be in the school. It should be seamless. So we've removed the distinction."

One place where the policy is having positive results is in the borough's primary schools. Telford is a relatively small area with just 84 schools but it planned the implementation of Facility carefully to ensure maximum success.

Brookside Primary School and Nursery Centre

The ability to extract accurate and immediate information is a powerful tool in planning a child's education and staff at Brookside Primary School and Nursery Centre are already seeing returns on their use of Facility for assessment.

The school is one of 10 in the borough's Intensive Support Programme (ISP), which is designed to support schools and help to improve their performance. The school's Assessment Co-ordinator Jason Millington is delighted with the progress since Facility was put in place. "For the first time we are able to look at the data in detail and we have discovered some interesting things. We are using the data to track and identify children who are not on target and draw up actions plan for those children who are borderline."

The scheme monitors the key topics of reading, writing and maths at six weekly intervals and staff meet regularly to ensure that their assessment levels in each subject are consistent. Children are first asked to do a self-assessment of where they are doing well and where they might need to work harder. Then they are given a level that they are currently working at and one to aim for.



"It's made a real difference because teachers are much more focussed on earlier intervention and can spot danger areas quickly and start working on them."

Jason Millington, Assessment Co-ordinator
Brookside Primary School and Nursery Centre

To make things clearer the school has drawn up a template of recognised standards in some subjects. For mathematics there is a poster in each classroom outlining exactly what tasks an individual pupil should be able to tackle at each level and giving examples of typical tasks and problems they should be able to take on.

The framework was drawn up in association with the borough's numeracy co-ordinator and is also available to parents so they can understand their child's progress. The new approach has helped enormously and staff are delighted to see improvement in standards showing in the last round of SATS tests, less than a year after implementation.