



Technology at the heart of learning

“ My ultimate dream is to have totally integrated systems that are both seamless and robust.”

Principal Katrina Borowski
Eggbuckland Community College

Eggbuckland Community College stands on a 44 acre site on the edge of Plymouth. It prides itself on its student leadership and citizenship activities as well as e-Learning.

The Technology College has an international reputation for the use of ICT. Three years ago it featured in a publication by the European Research Network for ICT in Schools of Tomorrow (ERNIST). It has appeared on Teachers' TV, won the Becta ICT Teacher of the Year award, is on the Specialist Schools' ICT register and has been praised by Ofsted for its e-learning. Every teacher at the college has a laptop and the whole site is Wi-Fi enabled.

So when it came to choosing a new management information system for the 1500 student school, Eggbuckland wanted something robust but flexible and coherent enough to meet its diverse needs.

It installed Facility two years ago because staff felt it would support the college's aims. Principal Katrina Borowski said: "We had a variety of different packages which we were using and we needed to draw them together under a common framework, partly to avoid duplication of data inputting. I was extremely impressed at a demonstration of Facility at another school. After talking to my eCollege manager and the rest of the leadership team in June we decided to install Facility. We installed it very quickly to be ready for the following September. We've been delighted with it ever since."

Integrated systems

The system now guides most of the college's management. eCollege Manager Matt Burrell said: "As a College, the use of ICT is interwoven with classroom practice as well as our administration. As far as teaching is concerned our priority was to ensure that teachers had access to resources and student information. We are now able to be more proactive because we have immediate access to data".

Facility's web-based access was one of the main deciding factors for the college. "Our previous supplier at the time had no intention of having web-based access to the system so we had all this important data but it was bricked up behind walls. This way you have a complete picture of each student at your fingertips."

Attendance is now logged lesson-by-lesson and is having a huge impact on identifying students with specific difficulties. "We already had good attendance so we can't say it has raised it a great deal but it has improved our ability to monitor and look for patterns. It is easier to identify a student who has problems attending a particular subject and we can then intervene appropriately."

The college logs positive and negative behaviour events because it is felt important to give praise and appropriate reward. Facility is used to identify students with 100 per cent attendance and their names are displayed on plasma screens throughout the college as part of a general plan to raise motivation.

Facility has also saved administrators' time. Egguckland operates a cashless canteen and all staff and students have a Smart card that acts as both charge account and library ticket. Creating them used to be a long and complex process but data is now fed directly to the card printer, saving hours on the task.

Keeping track

Egguckland is part of a consortium of five schools whose sixth formers often travel between sites for lessons. Keeping track of their movements has never been easy but Facility provides timetables and locations so the college can trace them easily. Time is saved when lessons are changed or cancelled because information can be passed on quickly to prevent wasted journeys.

The system improves transition between year groups because staff have access to a full history of each student.

Assessment is a key part of learning and each student at Egguckland receives two interim and one full report each year. Facility is used to record targets as well as preferred learning styles and the total data set is used to create individual learning plans.

Laptop group

The college is recognised for its e-learning and is always looking for new ways that technology can enhance students' experiences. Five years ago it set up a charitable trust to provide students with laptops and timetabled discrete teaching groups in years 8 and 9. These are taught in specialist classrooms and the scheme has proved highly motivating for those involved.

The current year 11 will be the first to provide results that can be meaningfully evaluated. Previously, laptop students have achieved only marginally better SATs scores than their peers but the real change has been in areas that are difficult to measure. Matt said: "Where it seems to make a difference is in developing confidence, communication and key skills. To gain those skills at such a young age is an enormous help to their future education."

The future

Now the college wants to go further. Katrina said: "So far it's been superb and we are now beginning to exploit its full potential." Now key functions are in place she is looking at other areas where Facility can help, such as studying curriculum costings to assess value for money. She hopes eventually to have the whole college teaching and administrative systems running coherently. "My ultimate dream is to have totally integrated systems that are both seamless and robust."