

CASE STUDY



“It’s like Bebo for school!”

How Harrold Priory Middle School have used the Netmedia Learning Platform to aid Social Interaction.



Contact us today to find out how Netmedia can help to transform teaching and learning in your school or LA.

Netmedia Education
1st Floor Christ Church
Birmingham Street
Oldbury
B69 4DY
Tel: 0800 912 2321
Fax: 0121 544 2111
Email: enquiries@netmediaeducation.com



www.netmediaeducation.com

Providing Learning Opportunities

Learning Platforms provide many opportunities for independent, social and collaborative learning. Often, the school's focus is on collaboration but through this case study, we are reminded of the vital role that social learning can play and what impact it can have on learning and interaction.

Harrold Priory Middle School in Bedfordshire have implemented their Netmedia Learning Platform to provide not only independent and collaborative learning experiences but have embraced the social opportunities that this technology provides.

From the very beginning, Harrold Priory took a consultative approach to Learning Platform use around the school. During the initial Learning Platform rollout pupils were asked what they would like to see in 'their' platform, and they have been helping to shape the school Learning Platform ever since. With a high level of their involvement since the beginning, pupils are excited and enthused about using the Learning Platform in day-to-day life.

For pupils, one of the major attractions of the Learning Platform is the 'look and feel' and the fact that information is broken down into separate 'boxes' or what Netmedia calls 'Properties'. This interface is very similar to many social networking sites used by pupils so its navigation is familiar, intuitive and very easy to use.

Development of a central information store

Pupils have been able to develop a number of Properties which has established the Learning Platform as the school's central information resource. 'Typical' Properties such as 'Daily Notices', 'School Calendar' and 'Newsletters' are included as well as a number of 'lifestyle' Properties, many suggested by the pupils themselves. Examples include:

- Weekly Movie Property detailing a current movie including synopsis and image
- Weekly sports update (both school sports and nationally)
- Nightly TV Listings
- Links to online radio stations
- Achiever of the week
- Current House Points tally
- Birthday calendar (Pupils opt-in to including their birthday)
- Google gadgets
- Book of the week
- Mini votes
- Whole school chat room
- Year group chat rooms
- Forums

The responsibility for updating most of these Properties is down to an individual or group of pupils within the school. The privilege of managing a Property is earned and the pupils take this responsibility very seriously – so much so that one pupil even updated her Property when on holiday in France!

Including these Properties within the Learning Platform means that teachers also have quick access to topical, relevant resources to integrate into lessons, for example using a movie synopsis as a starting point for discussion.

Interaction within a safe environment

Talking to the pupils, it is clear that they have a real enthusiasm for using the Learning Platform. "It's like Bebo for school!" commented one pupil. Many pupils are logging in every other night as they are able to personalise their 'Desktop' by adding extra 'fun' Properties alongside those placed by the school and are able to chat to friends. Using the Learning Platform as the first point of call for information, not just school work, also means that students can remain safe on the web as all external websites are verified for their content and added to a recommended list. Many of these websites pupils would be accessing from home anyway; for example gaming websites.

The Chat rooms are one of the most popular features with pupils and are used regularly to chat with friends. The school have set up individual year Chat rooms as well as a whole school Chat room so pupils can chat wherever they feel most comfortable. The Chat rooms and Forums are monitored by Year 8 pupils not teachers which enables the pupils to freely chat, again, within a safe environment.

Involving and consulting Parents

The consultative approach that the school have taken has also been extended to the parents. The school have run two evening sessions where parents can see the Learning Platform, how it is being used in school and what their children are doing with it. Ex-pupils who are now at the Upper School were on hand to discuss their experiences of the Learning Platform and parents were provided with their own log-in accounts. By including parents in the process the school can alleviate any fears they may have about the security of the Learning Platform. By experiencing for themselves just how secure their children are and seeing the information that pupils can access, parents can rest assured that their children are safe.

Empowering Pupils

There is certainly a balance that needs to exist between using the Learning Platform for academic purposes and social purposes. Harrold Priory Middle School have responded well to this challenge. By empowering pupils and providing them with part of the responsibility for maintaining the Learning Platform pupils have flourished, and the Learning Platform is an integral part of school and home life. With pupils determining much of the content they would like to see, this also provides a further incentive for them to log-in to the Learning Platform. There is no better way to demonstrate this than with comments from the pupils themselves:

"I think the [Learning Platform] is a great site as it is fun and educational."
F.L.

"The Learning Platform has been very useful in everyday school life. The Learning Platform has changed the way I might do things in a lesson, for example there might be a link to the website I need to go to at home. And it is not just for school work, we can email our friends. The Learning Platform means we can do this within a safe environment. My friends and I really enjoy working with the Learning Platform."
H.E.

