Longdean School
Case Study

Executive Summary

This case study investigates how Longdean School uses Webanywhere's on-site Moodle to provide teachers, students, parents and Governors with an exciting, flexible and functional learning platform that entirely addresses their needs.

About

Longdean school is an 11-18 Academy which was converted in August 2011. It is attended by students from the Hemel Hempstead area in Hertfordshire. Longdean has developed a strong culture of using ICT to support teaching & learning along with administrative functions and they continue to specialise in maths & computing.

The school works within an effective consortium of nine secondary schools, thirty-five primary schools, a college and a co-ordinating SAPG. Longdean drives the development and integration of the learning platform across this consortium with support from Webanywhere.

Requirements

In 2004, Longdean developed a shared vision of integrating all data systems into one, which was both reliable and accessible from anywhere. The system was to be fully integrated, flexible, creative and above all, needed to strongly support teaching and learning.

It was important that the system development was maintained and driven by teachers, parents and students, not by technical support teams. The MIS (Capita SIMS) integration included; curriculum assessments and achievements, teaching resources, shared and personal network areas, calendars and booking systems. The system also needed to be robust and flexible enough to cope with cross-consortium collaboration, a large number of concurrent users and large volumes of data.

Above all, a safe learning environment was to be created where staff, parents and students could work together to maximise student progress. Since 2004, the school has worked towards this goal, using the internal technical expertise of teaching and technical staff in collaboration with Webanywhere.

Solution

When Longdean initially contacted Webanywhere, the school was already using Moodle as a VLE, which integrated all data parts excep apart from the MIS data. However, they wanted to complete the circle with MIS integration and create a new Longdean Learning Platform (LLP).

Webanywhere could provide an excellent solution to Longdean's this final problem. Webanywhere recommended   integrating Moodle with their Capita SIMS integration system, providing the following benefits for users:

Students

This integration would allow students to access their marks, teacher feedback and other data that is relevant to them, both inside and outside of the classroom. This information can then be used as a benchmark for students to work from, providing a chance for self improvement.

There are many tools available such as progress bars and lesson objectives to aid them in this process. In addition, the learning platform encourages independence, develops numeracy & literacy skills and acts as a vehicle for self-organisation.

Teachers

SIMS integration benefits the teachers of Longdean school enormously, as it reduces the amount of time that is spent on admin. Moodle-SIMS integration provides a single access point where registration, grades and behavioural information can be entered, so that all records get automatically recorded within SIMS.

SIMS integration dramatically reduces the administration burden of maintaining the learning platform to the extent that staff can do this for themselves. For example, there are simple tools to enroll/un-enroll students into courses using data directly taken from SIMS and the timetable. Also, staff are free to create, delete, move and rename courses in which they wish to teach. It's then up to them to use the various tools to create stimulating activities that engage and support progress. Furthermore, at the start of the new school year, the system is able to update those who are new starters and those who have recently left. This saves time, allowing the teachers to focus on the education of the students.

The ability to access student MIS information whilst also getting course grades and progress at the same time, provides a powerful teaching & learning tool. It allows teachers to really get to 'know' the students in front of them so they can better plan differentiated programmes to maximise their progress.

Parents

Moodle-SIMS integration allows parents to access information on their child's performance such as homework results, reports, attendance, achievements and behaviour. The central and individual student calendars also provide powerful tools for monitoring their child's deadlines for classwork, homework, dates for trips, functions etc. In addition, communication between students, parents and staff is more efficient, timely and effective. Keeping parents informed not only benefits the student, but the school community as a whole by improving parental engagement.
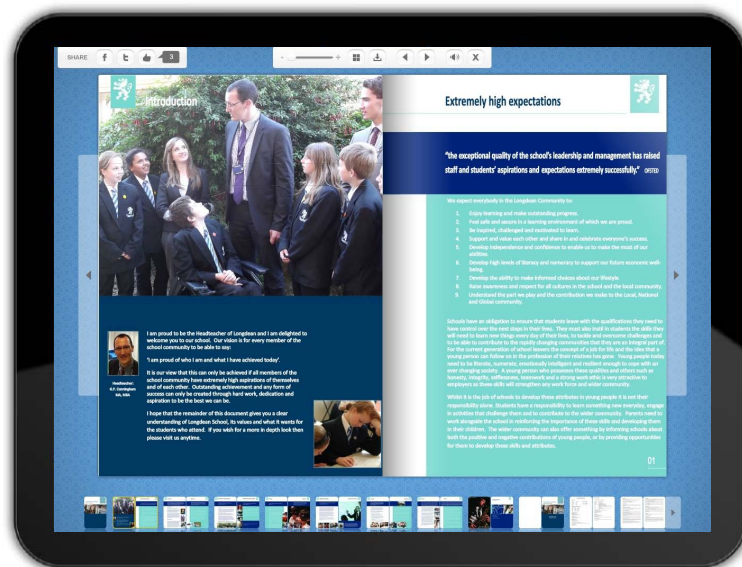
Configuration

Webanywhere are able to provide a number of installation options for Moodle and Moodle MIS integration. Longdean chose to self-manage an internal Linux server with online support from Webanywhere.

Internally, access to Moodle is direct whereas external access is made through a proxy server. The learning platform homepage provides a dash-board from which all other functions may be accessed, including network home directories and windows shared areas, without the need for multiple logins. In essence, it now provides a complete solution to the original requirements.

The system works equally well internally and externally on PC's, laptops as well as on mobile devices such as tablets, mobile phones and PDA's.

"I have experience of working with many ICT-related companies over more than 33 years. I have no hesitation in saying that Webanywhere to date has proven to be the most reliable and responsive company I have ever dealt with. Whenever we have a problem that we cannot resolve ourselves, an incident log (or in emergencies, a phone call) results in swift action. It is also refreshing to find a company that is responsive to suggestions for improvements and enhancements. It's marvelous to be able to create and use a system that works for us and does not dictate the way we must work"

Anthony Lewis, Assistant Headteacher, Longdean School

About Webanywhere

Established in 2003, Webanywhere began as a school website design company. Since then we have expanded our product range to include VLEs, e-portfolios and other e-learning tools, alongside curricular content. We're an official Moodle Partner and Capita Technical Partner, as well as a Mahara Partner and Google Apps Authorised Reseller.

Our product range supports schools in improving key metrics such as pupil achievement, quality of teaching, effective leadership and behavioural standards. School Jotter, the name for our school websites, is simple and easy to use and allows schools to add to, and update, their own website easily and quickly.

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