

## Kent secondary schools move school improvement online



### case study

**Raising standards of teaching and learning is no longer regarded as a job for a headteacher alone. Many schools are adopting a whole-school approach to school improvement and this is particularly effective in a secondary school, as many have a number of departmental staff with different areas of curriculum responsibility.**

For two schools in Kent, The Skills Factory's online self-evaluation system *schoolcentre.net* is being used to simplify the school improvement process and help ensure all pupils benefit from the best possible learning opportunities.

Fulston Manor is an outstanding secondary school situated in the market town of Sittingbourne. Attended by 1,200 11 to 18-year-olds, the school was awarded a Business and Enterprise specialism in 2005 and was recognised as a RAPP school (Raising Achievements Partnerships Programme) in 2009.

Previously, heads of department kept their own files for recording progress towards school improvement goals. The leadership team held regular meetings to update the paper self-evaluation form (SEF), but gathering the information they needed from departments in such a large school was a time-consuming process.

The introduction of *schoolcentre.net* in 2007 enabled the school's SEF and other related documents to be stored online. This made it easier for them to be updated and ensured the most current versions were accessible to those that needed them. This transformed the school improvement process at Fulston Manor and made it simpler for staff across departments to contribute to raising pupil attainment.

"Having an online system for managing school improvement has put department heads in the driving

seat within their individual subject areas and allows them to see where the work they are doing to boost pupils' achievement fits in to the whole school vision," says Assistant Headteacher, Maria Gash.

Subject heads can manage their own school improvement tasks online using *schoolcentre.net* and the leadership team can log on and see what actions have been taken across the school to support pupils' learning. "We have found that the system has encouraged department heads to showcase their successes and this gives them a real sense of pride in what they have achieved."

Using *schoolcentre.net*, departmental staff can add notes and attach evidence to demonstrate the progress pupils are making in their different curriculum topics. Sharing information across departments is quick and easy as staff can simply log on and find the data they need, such as details of an initiative that has boosted pupils' achievement in literacy, for example. The leadership team can also use the system to monitor progress towards school improvement goals or set deadlines relating to special projects that are being introduced to enhance pupils' learning.

Another advantage of using an online system for school improvement is that departments can keep track of priorities relating to their subject areas and link actions that contribute to Business and Enterprise or any of the school's other specialisms. This helps ensure effective learning is embedded across the school.

"The evidence we have been able to provide from within *schoolcentre.net* has supported us in securing funding for projects such as Creative Partnerships, which is designed to ensure pupils benefit from cross curricular learning opportunities. Using the information on the system, we have been able to demonstrate where investment is required to support pupils' learning and show what impact

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that investment is having on achievement," says Maria.

In September, the school will enhance their use of the system with the introduction of the Departmental SEF – a new function within *schoolcentre.net* that enables individual departments of a school to complete Part A (the Evaluation questions) of the Ofsted Self Evaluation Form relating to their specific department.

The use of *schoolcentre.net* has helped ensure staff in all departments can contribute fully to the school improvement process. For the leadership team, the system helps ensure self-evaluation at Fulston Manor is not simply a paper-pushing exercise.

**Sandwich Technology School**

Awarded a grade of 'outstanding' by Ofsted in January 2009, Sandwich Technology School is a mixed secondary attended by 1,350 11 to 18-year-olds. The school is recognised for its specialist status in technology, applied learning and as a training school.

*schoolcentre.net* was introduced in 2007 to help reduce administration and ensure greater efficiency in completing the school's SEF. Prior to this, senior staff members and heads of faculty attended regular meetings to discuss school improvement plans and update targets. This was a paper-based exercise so it took time for staff to collate and feed back information on the progress that was being made towards raising pupils' attainment.

"As a technology school, we wanted to be more innovative in the way we managed school improvement and reduce the time staff had to spend in meetings. *schoolcentre.net* has enabled us to update the SEF online alongside a wealth of other relevant information. This has enabled it to become a living document that sits at the heart of our commitment to providing our students with the best possible education," says Veronica Gomez, Head of School.

Using *schoolcentre.net*, the leadership team can log on from school or from home to add notes and attach documents that demonstrate the school's successes

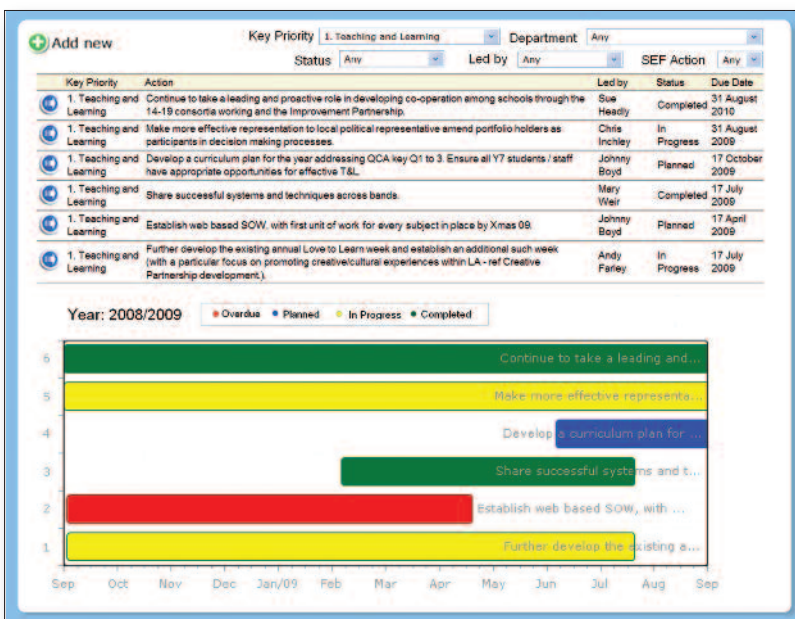
in enhancing pupils' learning. This could include data on boys' achievement in maths or examples of how the school is working in partnership with other schools and organisations in their role as a training school.

"We provide training for schools in areas such as mentor coaching and emotional intelligence. Responses to the questionnaires we design help us to identify our own training needs, as well as those of the schools we work with. All this information is stored on *schoolcentre.net*, which makes it easy for us to link it to areas of the SEF relating to our work within the wider community."

To support the smooth transition to a interlinked, web-based system, the school made use of The Skills Factory's scheduled clinics and staff were impressed with how quickly the training and support provided helped to address teething problems.

There are plans to expand the use of *schoolcentre.net* so that staff across the school can contribute to raising standards of teaching and learning. Not least, from next term, *schoolcentre.net's* Departmental SEF function will ensure heads of department can complete specific areas of the SEF that relate to their curriculum subjects.

"By extending access to *schoolcentre.net*, we will be able to work more effectively in ensuring we continue to provide every child with the high standard of education parents have come to expect from Sandwich Technology School."



Actions listed in the School Improvement Plan with a visual timeline

- Benefits:**
- Provides direct links between SEF and School Improvement Plan
  - Anytime-anywhere access by all staff and entire school community
  - Enables all stakeholders to contribute to effective planning
  - Fully customisable
  - Easy attachment of evidence

contact

For more information about *schoolcentre.net*:

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