



Blackfen School for Girls



New Tools – New Opportunities

CASE STUDY

How to personalise learning, improve communication, and make sure that you take advantage of a wide range of resources in your teaching material? – Important questions – and just a few of many that schools across Europe are asking themselves. Blackfen School for Girls is just one example of a school that set out to tackle these issues, taking steps which led them to a full roll out of the London Managed Learning Environment (MLE) powered by Fronter.



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Lorraine Line
Head of mathematics

Blackfen School for Girls is a non-selective girl’s school in a borough of London that still has the 11+. It has more than 1,350 students on-roll, including more than 300 in a mixed Sixth Form. The school is at the forefront of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in education and is currently in the fourth year of the first phase of its Maths and Computing Specialism.

In June 2007, the London Grid for Learning (LGfL), which is responsible for more than 2,500 schools across London, procured a Managed Learning Environment (MLE) and supplied it to 28 of its pilot schools. The MLE, which is powered by Fronter, was fully integrated into the schools and following a comprehensive review, conducted within BECTA’s guidelines, Fronter was awarded a new contract to provide a learning platform to LGfL’s 2500 schools. Blackfen School for Girls initially introduced the MLE to a select number of students during the pilot in June 2007. It then had a wider roll out in the half term running, leading up to Christmas 2007.

By implementing the MLE, the school aimed to raise standards by providing additional personalised learning opportunities for students outside of school hours. Blackfen also wanted to increase the lines of communication between teachers; teachers and students and between students. Blackfen now has a total of 21 teachers fully trained and skilled to use the MLE throughout the curriculum.

In each area a lead teacher was chosen to be specially trained by Fronter and become part of the school’s MLE support team. In modern foreign languages, Isabelle Auvinet created learning pages that provided links to stored resources and external websites for revision purposes. The resources she provided include:

- sound files of passages with correct pronunciation which the students could replay and speak along to
- songs that reinforce vocabulary and pronunciation

- video clips with transcripts of dialogue
- information sheets and pages used during the lessons

The features in the London MLE that provided the initial impetus were:

1. **Test tool** - through which Isabelle was able to check understanding and knowledge of verb endings
2. **Hand-in folders** - through which the girls were able to post an outline of their oral presentations, and receive detailed comments on their work and model pronunciation
3. **Forums** - which have enabled the girls to communicate with each other, and with Isabelle; and occasionally in the target language
4. **Result Matrix** - which provided Isabelle with speedy responses to the girls assessment tasks and enabled students to see the level they were working at, by viewing their Portfolio; in preparation for GCSE examinations
5. **News and Messages** - through which Isabelle posted challenges for homework activities. These had time-constraints which motivated the girls to complete these challenges on time.



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Andy McGee
Assistant Head Teacher

The outcomes have been very successful so far. Assistant head teacher Andy McGee commented, “the girls are extremely enthusiastic about the feedback they receive from Isabelle. It has helped them to focus their revision and they know what to do to improve their grades. The speed with which they know their results has amazed them and provided additional motivation. The girls have prepared much better for their oral examinations and their ability to read in the target language has increased.”

In the maths department, teachers also wanted to develop cross-borough collaboration amongst the Heads of Mathematics and their departments. Lorraine Line, head of mathematics was the lead teacher for Fronter in maths and used the London MLE in five areas:

1. Making the Mathematics department more efficient by structuring a “**Shared Resources**” departmental room and communicating dynamically with each member of the department through the MLE.
2. **Involving parents** from an early stage by using the MLE to run the Year 7 Numeracy Evening, at which she informed them of the opportunities to see their daughters’ work and marks
3. Creating a room for **cross-borough collaboration** of Mathematics teachers with links to their own school’s website (and in time Mathematics department rooms)
4. Supporting KS4 & KS5 students with **individual learning and revision** for examinations. This was been done by listening to the girls describing their needs and responding to the students requests
5. Developing a **Training package**. Loraine has developed a programme for introducing her colleagues to the London MLE that involves morning sessions in which the classroom templates are shown, with samples of the key features being used, followed by supported practice in the afternoon so that the teacher has their own room up and running by the end of the day.

Similarly to modern foreign languages, Lorraine has also had positive feedback with the maths department. “Communication within the department has never been better; planning and sharing of resources and lesson ideas has been great. Mathematics teachers in other schools are beginning to use the collaboration room and sharing their expertise with each other and the response from the parents was overwhelmingly positive,” says Lorraine.

Initially the school experienced some minor challenges with the MLE but these were soon overcome. Andy McGee advises “introducing students to the MLE in the first lessons needs careful planning. Students need to know their user-ids, passwords, and the logging in procedures, which are often forgotten or misplaced.”

Blackfen also found that the school administrator was key in setting up the navigation tools of the rooms and the overall structure of the MLE. Should they leave, the expertise and input would be sorely missed. To overcome this, the school set up a small team of administrators to offset this issue.



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Raising aspirations - releasing potential