

## Do you also need a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)?

Tricky question! The answer, of course, depends on the needs of your school.

### Reasons to use Merlin :

All schools will need to be able to provide personal online space for pupils and many will probably want to be able to upload resources in shared areas online and use tools such as discussion forums, blogs, wikis, online surveys, etc. Merlin will allow you to do this.

Merlin's collaboration tools will be available to all local authority schools (primary, secondary and special) across the South West, enabling cross-school collaboration through a common system and set of tools.

Merlin will be subsidized and so free of any direct charge to schools for at least the first four years.

### Reasons why you might consider a VLE:

VLEs vary and each may have a different range of features but, in general, what they can do that Merlin can't is provide a single package of online assessment and recording of pupil work and track pupil activity.

If you want to be able to do these sorts of things then it would be worth investigating what the VLE providers can offer.

Because VLEs vary it is a good idea to be quite clear about what your needs are before you compare the market.

It is anticipated that in the early stages, schools will grow their use of Merlin and include a VLE at a later date if needed.

### What should you do now?

- Read the SWGfL Merlin leaflet sent with this newsletter.
- Attend one of the raising awareness sessions running throughout the year.
- Complete the **Becta Self Review Framework** to evaluate your school's current use of ICT and readiness for Merlin. <https://selfreview.becta.org.uk/>.
- Visit—or subscribe to—the **South West Grid for Learning's website** for the latest Merlin updates. See the Learning Platforms section at [www.swgfl.org.uk](http://www.swgfl.org.uk).
- Visit—or subscribe to—the **Wiltshire ICT Team's website** for local Merlin updates. [www.ictcentre.wiltslea.org.uk](http://www.ictcentre.wiltslea.org.uk)

Melksham PDC  
3 Lancaster Park  
Bowerhill  
Melksham  
Phone: 01225 793349  
Fax: 01225 793348

### Your key Merlin contacts are:

**Helen Southwell**, Primary ICT Adviser/Merlin Manager  
[helensouhwell@ictcentre.wiltsea.org.uk](mailto:helensouhwell@ictcentre.wiltsea.org.uk)

**Vince Marriot**, Secondary ICT Consultant,  
[vincemarriott@ictcentre.wiltslea.org.uk](mailto:vincemarriott@ictcentre.wiltslea.org.uk)



## Wilts ICT Newsletter

[www.ictcentre.wiltslea.org.uk](http://www.ictcentre.wiltslea.org.uk)



### SWGfL Merlin

This issue of our newsletter is devoted to SWGfL Merlin

### In this special Merlin issue...

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### Merlin Goes Live on 6th October

The South West Grid for Learning (SWGfL) has developed Merlin, a system which will provide the foundation for your school's learning platform. Over time, it will allow the different ICT systems in your school (administrative systems such as SIMs and those connected with learning) to be integrated and accessed through a single log-in.

It will also provide users with personal online space and a range of regional collaboration tools, facilitating working together through shared spaces.

See the leaflet with this newsletter for more about what Merlin is and can do.



The future of learning is here!

### How does Merlin fit with Government targets?

Three of the key Government targets for ICT development are:

**2008** - Every pupil should have access to a personalised online learning space with the potential to support an e-portfolio.

*Merlin will provide this, with online space being split into separate 'private' and 'e-portfolio' areas.*

**2010** - Every school should have integrated learning and management systems (a comprehensive suite of learning platform technologies).

*Merlin will provide the foundation for your school's learning platform and facilitate the integration of different systems.*

**2012** - All schools will need to offer parents real-time access to pupil information (including the opportunity for secure online access) wherever and whenever they want.

*At present, Merlin will not directly enable this. However, SWGfL are currently working with MIS providers to develop this solution through Merlin.*

## Implementing SWGfL Merlin in Wiltshire

### Phased site set-up and training

Merlin will go live on 6th October but site set-up and training for all schools will need to be phased over a period of time. As such, in Wiltshire we have already identified 30 schools and individuals who are most ready to engage with Merlin as early adopters. These will act as Mentors as we expand the implementation of SWGfL Merlin across the authority over the course of the next 2 years.

A variety of Merlin awareness raising sessions will be run for head teachers, senior managers and ICT subject leaders to help discuss the issues and assess readiness. These will take a variety of forms and include conference sessions, subject leader updates as well as input to individual clusters.

Engaging with Merlin is a strategic whole-school decision and not just an ICT issue. Head teachers, senior managers and subject leaders should see Merlin and find out more about it when they can by attending one of the many events planned for the coming year.

## Finding out more about Merlin

### Early Adopters

#### Primary

Broad Chalke  
Bulford  
Coleme  
Corsham  
Downton  
Fitzmaurice  
Fynamore  
Greentrees  
Longmeadow  
Mere  
Nomansland  
North Bradley  
Queen's Crescent  
Rowde  
Southwick  
St Marks, Salisbury  
St Paul's, Chippenham  
Sutton Veny  
Walwayne Court

#### Secondary

Bradon Forest  
Devizes  
Lavington  
Salisbury High School  
St Augustine's  
Castledown  
Stonhenge  
Trafalgar  
SWGS  
Matravers

### Primary ICT Conference-21st Century Learning

19th November, Devizes which will include a Merlin session.  
Booking deadline: 10th October Wilts CPD [www.wiltscpd.co.uk](http://www.wiltscpd.co.uk)

### Primary ICT Subject Leader Updates

0-10-08	Christian Malford	1.30-3.30
22-10-08	Bulford	1.30-3.30
6-11-08	Pewsey	1.30-3.30
12-11-08	Walwayne Court	1.30-3.30

All sessions and can be booked through [beverlymessam@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:beverlymessam@wiltshire.gov.uk)

### Secondary ICT Heads of Department meeting

21-11-08 Melksham PDC

### Cluster "Are you ready for Merlin?" sessions

Further information to follow

## Early adopters and sharing good practice

Autumn training will be commence with our 30 Merlin Mentors who will begin to engage with Merlin in their own schools and who are willing to share their experiences of working with it.

These early adopters will meet regularly to feed back about Merlin experiences, ideas for future development and suggestions for supporting schools' use.

We intend to make available some examples of how Merlin tools and shared areas can be used in schools to support teaching and learning.

In Summer 2009, we will be working with individual Mentors and their cluster to support the wider implementation of SWGfL Merlin across our schools in a phased roll out based on readiness to engage.



## What will happen to the SWGfL Portal?

Support for SWGfL Portal to be phased out from 31st March 2009.

The SWGfL Portal has been funded by local authorities and the South West Grid for Learning, enabling schools to have access without any direct charge. The Portal is being phased out from March 31<sup>st</sup> though existing users will be supported until they switch over to Merlin.

The Portal will remain available beyond that date to schools who wish to pay for continued access. It is envisaged, however, that schools would benefit from transferring from the Portal and engaging with SWGfL Merlin.

Merlin is not merely a replacement for the Portal as it has features that the Portal does not have. However, it has many similar tools that will enable working within community type groups similar to the Portal.

This would also be a good time for existing Portal users to review your school's communities and consider which ones could be revamped.

**Schools who are currently active users of the Portal and wish to migrate to Merlin will be given priority access to Merlin training during the next phase.**

## TIMELINE



<b>Summer 08</b>	Regional pilot testing of Merlin	<b>Jan - Mar 09</b>	Administrator training courses
<b>October 08</b>	<b>6th - SWGfL Merlin goes live</b>		Planned launch of further KS2 interface options
	School sites set-up (Early Adopters)		Cluster "Are you ready for Merlin?" sessions
	2 day Merlin Mentor Induction & Training		Cluster based training applications submitted
	Launch of 'My First Place' - early years and KS1 interface	<b>March 09 - July 10</b>	Phase 1 cluster based training
	Primary ICT Subject Leader Updates		Phase 2 cluster based training
<b>November 08</b>	Primary ICT Conference		Phase 3 cluster based training
	Secondary ICT Heads of Department meeting		Phase 4 cluster based training
<b>January 09</b>	Expected SIMS readiness to integrate with Merlin		Phase 5 cluster based training
	First meeting of Wiltshire Early Adopters Group (WEAG)		Phase 6 cluster based training