



Exploiting ICT to improve parental engagement

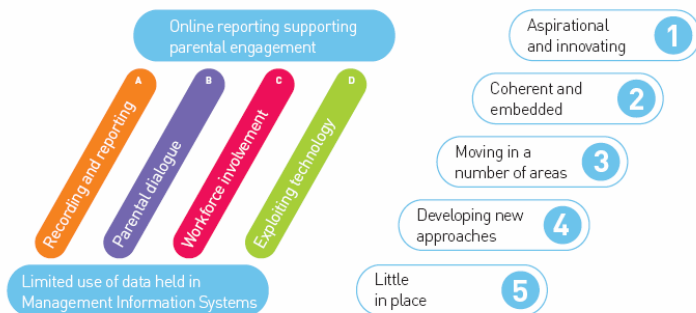
Moving towards online reporting

Research shows that improving the quality of discussion between parents and learners about their education makes all the difference to what learners achieve.

Technology can help you provide useful information at an appropriate time, to improve this dialogue.

- More learners and parents will have access to technology at home through the Government's plans to provide computers and internet access to families.
- Secondary schools need to provide online reporting for parents by 2010, and primary schools by 2012.

Some of our pilot schools have already started to use SWGfL Merlin to improve their communication with parents. This process will develop as Merlin continues to evolve, moving schools along the continuum from informing and involving to engaging parents in their child's learning.



Becta have produced a number of guidance documents and case studies that show how schools are moving towards this and help schools map their own progress. More information can be found at <http://www.becta.org.uk/engaging.php>

What should you do now?

- Attend one of the raising awareness sessions. See page 1 for dates and venues
- Discuss implementation of Merlin with other schools in your cluster and consider appropriate phase of training
- Identify school priorities (attached)
- Complete Merlin Readiness questions and application (attached) and return to; Beverly Messam beverleymessam@wiltshire.gov.uk Melksham PDC
- 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
- Visit the Becta website for more information about Learning Platforms, online reporting etc. www.becta.org.uk/

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Wilts ICT Newsletter

www.ictcentre.wiltsea.org.uk



SWGfL Merlin

This is the 2nd issue of our newsletter devoted to SWGfL Merlin

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My First Place on track for January 2009

My First Place is designed to support the key elements outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage framework and KS1 curriculum. It provides a safe and exciting area for children to explore topics and resources and develop their ICT skills. Through My First Place children can develop their learning potential through activities that are fun, motivating, enabling and entirely relevant in young children's lives today.



My First Place is fully integrated with SWGfL Merlin; if a teacher or pupil already has SWGfL Merlin account then they will have access to MFP.

Are you ready for Merlin?

We are holding a number of **raising awareness briefings** which will include some information about the planned Broadband upgrade for schools, a demonstration of SWGfL Merlin including the new Early Years /KS 1 interface-My First Place and further information regarding the roll out of training across the authority.

| | | |
|-----------|---------|----------------------------|
| Monday | 19-1-09 | Salisbury Diocesan Centre |
| Monday | 26-1-09 | Urchfont Manor, Nr Devizes |
| Wednesday | 28-1-09 | Southwick Primary School |
| Monday | 2-2-09 | Colerne Primary School |
| Thursday | 5-2-09 | Mere Primary School |
| Tuesday | 10-2-09 | Fynamore Primary School |
| Monday | 2-3-09 | Bulford Primary School |

To book a place on one of these events please contact Beverly Messam
 Tel 01225 793349
 Fax 01225 793348
 E-mail beverleymessam@wiltshire.gov.uk

School Leaders will need to have a clear sense of what they wish to achieve through the implementation of a Learning Platform in their school and would benefit from attending one of these sessions.

Implementing a Learning Platform

School Leaders will need to have a clear sense of what they wish to achieve through the implementation of a Learning Platform in their school.

The development of a Learning Platform appropriate for your school, may be one of the most important strategic planning decisions that can be made.

All Wiltshire schools will have the option to implement **SWGfL Merlin** which may provide an adequate solution and meet requirements set by the DCFS such as:

- Access to personalised learning space
- Parental access
- Management Information Systems access

For schools that already have a Learning Platform or Virtual Learning Environment in place, SWGfL Merlin can provide added functionality and interoperability, allowing for simplified access to learning and teaching content outside of school, providing safe interconnectivity between sites and the opportunity to communicate and collaborate between schools and learners.

TIMELINE

| | | | |
|--------------------|--|------------------|--------------------------|
| January 09 | Launch of 'My First Place' Early Years and KS1 interface | Term 5 09 | Phase 1 Initial training |
| | More Merlin additional training for Early Adopters | Term 6 09 | Phase 2 Initial training |
| | BETT Show Discover the latest ways to use ICT to support Learning & Teaching | Term 1 10 | Phase 3 Initial training |
| | Raising Awareness Briefings See Page 1 for dates and venues | Term 2 10 | Phase 4 Initial training |
| February 09 | Raising Awareness Briefings (See Page 1 for dates and venues) | Term 3 10 | Phase 5 Initial training |
| | Schools complete 'Merlin Readiness Questionnaire & Training Application' | Term 4 10 | Phase 6 Initial training |
| March 09 | 'Readiness Questionnaire & Training Application' submitted | Term 5 10 | Phase 7 Initial training |
| | Additional KS2 tools available in Merlin | Term 6 10 | Phase 8 Initial training |

What are our pilot schools saying?

Merlin is a fantastic resource with so much potential, it is hard to know where to begin with it. *Staff*

Can my mum really see what I have been doing on this?
Gareth Yr 9

It's so cool! *Chloe Yr 9*

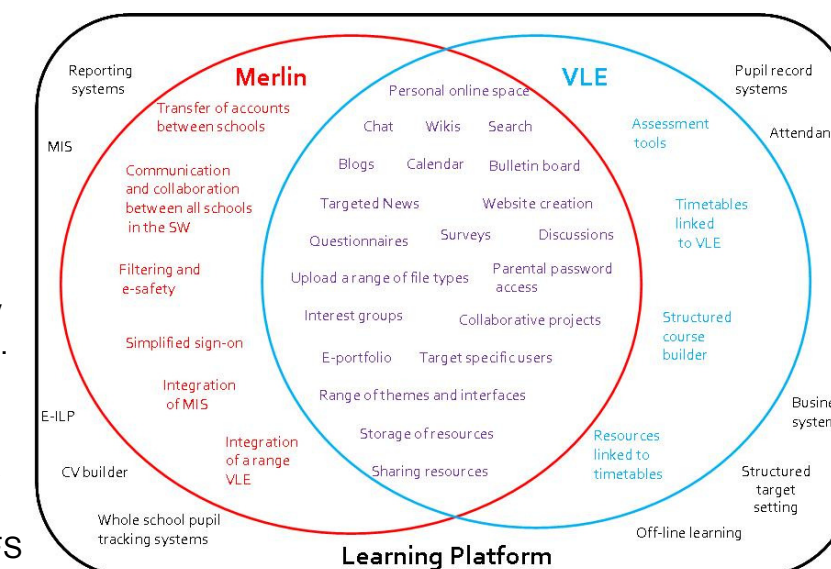
At Fitzmaurice, we have decided to use Merlin to help develop assessment throughout the school. Merlin provides an easily accessible platform to store and retrieve data, which makes our job easier. But this is only the beginning! *Teacher*

Building on SWGfL Merlin

Whilst SWGfL Merlin will provide a good solution for many schools, it may be the case that additional functionality will be required.

Additional resources and features can be added to your Learning Platform through the purchase of 3rd party content (or educational software) or by adding a Virtual Learning Environment.

VLEs offer different functionality. Each will have strengths and weaknesses. SWGfL Merlin will evolve – particularly in the area of online reporting where it will work towards meeting current DCFS targets.



The diagram above illustrates what SWGfL Merlin and VLEs have in common, what is unique to each and what features might, at present, lie outside either.

SWGfL Merlin and VLEs both offer online space which can be used for the storage of content together with a range of tools for communication and collaboration.

SWGfL Merlin's uniqueness lies in features such as being able to transfer accounts between establishments in the SW, being able to communicate and collaborate with all involved in education in the SW together with the simplified sign on, interoperability and integration services.

VLEs' strength is in providing a structured way of building and delivering courses, often linked to the MIS and the timetable.

Identifying School Priorities

SWGfL Merlin can support many priorities that you have as a school or as an individual. At a high level, these include:

- Accessing school and pupil information
- Creating personal online workspaces for every user
- Providing online space for the sharing of resources
- Giving pupils access to learning outside school
- Supporting assessment for learning
- Facilitating communication and collaboration
- Sharing information with parents

As a first step, consider working with the management team to identify areas of the school development plan that could be facilitated through the use of Merlin.