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Case study

Impact of technology on teacher workload: Witton Park Academy

Witton Park Academy have reduced the number of information systems they use to maximise efficiency and encourage collaboration.

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Introduction

Witton Park Academy is a Secondary School in Blackburn with approximately 920 students. They are part of the Achievement Through Collaboration Trust with Bowland High School.

Background

Witton Park Academy previously had 8 different online platforms in place, with ongoing frustrations regarding the need for constant updates. They decided to simplify this approach to just two platforms – one for

pedagogy, using Google G Suite, and one for school administration, using the school's existing management information system (MIS), to maximise efficiency.

Why technology?

Witton Park Academy were inspired by the way in which a local alternative provision setting had been using the Google environment to develop collaboration, with students and staff able to access materials anytime, anywhere. The challenge was to scale this up to a large secondary academy. To achieve this, we had to ensure consistent rollout across the school.

What steps did the school take to implement technology?

Faculty implementation plans were produced to analyse current and future use of the Google tools. Two or three Google Champions (Google Level 1 qualified) were appointed within each faculty to lead training and facilitate the sharing of effective practice to train teachers quickly. Google Forms were sent out to staff in advance of training sessions.

The school provides ongoing training and support, including drop-in surgeries to address specific issues and occasional parent drop-in training sessions.

Staff and students now successfully use Google Chromebooks and the Google G Suite Platform, which can be accessed over any internet browser.

Impact on teacher workload: planning, collaboration and communication

Collaboration

The use of Google G Suite allows staff to work collaboratively, and documents can be analysed on the go. Through shared documents, staff can provide thoughts in advance of meetings, which sometimes negates the need for a meeting. When meetings do take place, the technology allows staff to provide immediate feedback. Communication has drastically improved as a result, with a culture of instant feedback and inclusivity across the school.

Planning

Exploiting the opportunities that shared online documents can bring, the school shares their development plan with staff via a Google Doc. This has improved the speed and efficiency of how teams share tasks. G Suite allows teachers to develop and adapt tasks, which can be re-used, with necessary adaptations, repeatedly. They can also be shared amongst staff, significantly reducing time spent on lesson planning.

Communication

The leadership team appreciates ongoing feedback and ideas from staff on how the school operates. Google Forms have allowed staff to provide quick and easy feedback on a variety of issues, encouraging those who would not always contribute in meetings to have a voice and allowing anonymity where appropriate.

Impact on teacher workload – assessment

Students use the G Suite to complete numerous tasks, and teachers provide feedback in written or audio form as part of digital interactive notebooks, which makes providing feedback easier without carrying student books around.

Google G Suite has made it easier for teachers to post homework tasks online. Teachers can prepare these in advance and schedule when students can view them with 'go live' dates. Self-marking forms and tasks to check understanding accompany these, reducing the time teachers had to spend on printing homework sheets for manual distribution.

Each faculty records relevant assessment data using Google Sheets. Rather than being spread across several platforms, student level data is in one folder and is transferred into the MIS by a data manager, allowing teaching staff time to focus on data analysis.

"With the use of a cloud based system, I am able to work more collaboratively on documents in real time, plan lessons which are integrated and scheduled with a virtual classroom – hence allowing me to be significantly more organised and reduce the need to print."

Teacher of Science

Recommendations

- The temptation can be to focus on precision in documents – with excessive time spent perfecting the look of documents. Agree basic expectations to avoid this.
- Be aware of the time taken for warranty repairs to be undertaken and if

budget allows, it is useful to have 'hot swap' identical devices to stand in during repairs.

For further details, please contact Mr A Burton, associate headteacher at aburton@wittonpark.org.uk.

The government does not endorse any particular commercial products, and any products named in this case study are provided as examples only.

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