



New BSF campus coupled with Life Learning Cloud learning platform takes education at Bexhill High School into the 21st century

The School that is redefining learning:

Bexhill High School in East Sussex is a mixed comprehensive with 1,517 students. In 2010, the school relocated to a new £38 million building, under the Labour Government's Building Schools for the Future programme. The grant was awarded to help the local council achieve its vision for 21st century education, providing high quality academic education in new state-of-the-art buildings.

21st Century Learning

Principal, Mike Conn, was keen to create a life changing opportunity for the children of Bexhill. Seated in 'communities' set around the outside of the school's massive central atrium pupils learn in 'pods', with the subject teacher rather than the student moving between the pods each time a new lesson begins. All have access to the schools new Life Learning Cloud from UniServity - a dynamic web 3.0 cloud-based learning platform, which uses semantic technology to conduct intelligent analysis based on the interests, strengths and priorities of the user, to 'push' pertinent information to student's desktops, helping the school to provide 21st century learning for each and every pupil. The focus is very much on the learner.

The Life Learning Cloud has proven to be particularly useful in supporting the innovative new curriculum at the school where 40 percent is dedicated to Discoveries, including science, technology and maths; 40 percent is dedicated to Culture and Communication, including English, modern languages and humanities and 20 percent to Wellbeing, including the arts and sports.

Mike Conn enthused about the new facilities, stating that: “There are very few state schools, if any, across the country, which can offer the facilities we now have. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for our pupils.”

New opportunities - “just amazing”

Commenting on the installation of the Life Learning Cloud, Steve Blake, Director of ICT and E-Learning at the school, said, “We have been working with UniServity since 2007 and, prior to implementing Life, we used UniServity’s CLC learning platform. The CLC support provided by UniServity was outstanding and we decided to move to the next generation Life Learning Cloud to reflect the dynamic teaching approaches that are being implemented at Bexhill.”

“We are one of the first schools to actively use the Life Learning Cloud. Teachers have been using the platform for markbooks, to create student tasks and produce resources and are really excited to take advantage of the new and improved features of the Life Learning Cloud, including applications like Wikis, Posties (virtual post-it notes that can be posted in Life), conversations and blogs, which support the modern direction of their teaching.”

Life-changing Learning:

Thanks to the up-to-date and modern nature of the Life Learning Platform, students have embraced the new technology, which Steve explained was integral to the planning of the new building: “Previous learning platforms had felt quite clunky and dated, however, students are familiar with the technologies that Life uses which are similar to the social media sites they use at home. They are engaged by the modern appearance and therefore keen to get involved and use it.”

Life, by UniServity, enables learners to:

- make choices about when, where, how, why, and with whom they learn
- access information about their own learning so that they can make informed choices
- discover learning resources, learning partners, and learning tools
- be free from the boundaries of buildings, timetables and peers

Steve commented: “Each pupil and each teacher has their own individual netbook, enabling them to access the platform whenever they like, wherever they are. In the old building students were limited to using the internet in rooms with ICT facilities and we weren’t able to benefit from it in the same way that we do now. The learning platform comes into its own in this kind of environment where everyone can benefit and use it to improve learning, finding their own resources at their own pace to discover what they need. There are quite literally no boundaries to students’ opportunities in the new school.”

The additional features of the Life platform mean that students and teachers will have new ways to assess and demonstrate learning through applications, explained Steve. “For example, Teachers can upload a discussion topic to Life using a Postie and then students can safely add their thoughts or comments from their net books in the learning pods, or even outside of the school. These applications enable everyone to get involved and help teachers to see how well a subject is being understood.” This information can then be safely stored for students to return to and use as a reference in their learning.

Collaborative learning

At Bexhill High School, the new learning platform is being used effectively to promote independent learning, part of the Government’s Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategy, however, students have also been utilising the platform as a way to learn collaboratively, something that has proven to be particularly effective. As Steve explained:

“We can use Life to assign tasks to students who would not necessarily be in the same classroom, something that has proven to be an advantage for students’ learning in the past. County advisors visited the school for English and literacy and we assigned students in Year 7 the task of producing an online newspaper. They researched and uploaded the content to a forum which was then moderated by Year 9 students in a completely different part of the building. Once it had been edited by the Year 9s, the content was uploaded to the school website for all to see.”

Since then, the school has been recognised by Ofsted for its ‘improving trend in attainment especially in English, mathematics and science.’

Steve continued, “The collective digital newspaper not only assists in learning, it helps students to develop their interaction and social skills too, encouraging them to work together. The Life Learning Platform is even more intuitive and the suggested resources

will help students who are involved in compiling the newspaper to do their research in future. Pupils can communicate across the platform to produce the best work they possibly can and get the most out of their learning.

“We have previously created an online newspaper with four different European schools with which we are linked - this paper was in several languages, something that the Life Learning Cloud will be an invaluable part of when repeated in the future.”

The Future:

While the previous learning platform enabled teachers to store work, mark work and provide feedback, The Life Learning Cloud has many new additions that also enable teachers to benefit from the implementation of the platform in the new building and, at Bexhill High School, the platform is now used as an optimum teaching resource.

One of these features, The Life Learning Exchange, provides a quick and easy way to share and acquire the 25 million + resources, projects, learning spaces, partnerships and tools within the global Life community, enabling teachers to take advantage of the wealth of resources that can be used to assist in teaching and lesson planning.

“The platform allows teachers to keep everything in one place and find inspiring material from many other places to be used in lesson planning, resource making or to find specific material that can be used to help students with learning or behavioural difficulties”, explained Steve. At Bexhill High School, a large number of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) are admitted, a higher number than the national average. Steve commented: “Using the learning platform enables teachers to identify students with SEN and provide them with extra links or resources, helping them to carry out the same work and arrive at the same place by using additional information that suits their learning needs.”

Now that Life has been introduced to the school, Steve explained how the platform will fit in with the school’s continued plans going forward: “The Life Learning Cloud is far more than a place to store finished work, students and teachers will be using it as part of their learning and teaching every day - it was chosen to be an integral part of teaching practice at Bexhill High School in order to reflect the modern teaching approaches that we can now utilise in the unique new facilities.”

Concluding, Dawn Mulholland, Chief Operating Officer at UniServity, commented:

“Working with Bexhill High School has been an extremely exciting venture for the team. The Life platform is perfectly aligned to the new vision at the school and working in

partnership towards a common goal that prioritises the learner is integral in taking education to the next level. We embrace their vision and are excited to continue the relationship with the school in order to continue this.”

For more information, email the team at info@UniServity.Com or follow @LifelsAbout #LifelsAboutLearning

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