

# Paper free revolution hits Welsh schools

Computerised school report cards and setting homework at the click of a mouse are all part of an education revolution taking place in Wales.

All 11 secondary schools in one local authority, Neath Port Talbot, have signed up to a ground-breaking system designed to save teachers' time and give parents greater access to school information.

Pathways allows teachers to write, amend and send out electronic report cards and to mark work anywhere they have access to the internet.

It can also be expanded to let parents log on to check their children have arrived at school safely or to help them with homework.

Cefn Saeson Comprehensive in Neath is one of a block of 10 schools launching Pathways, which was developed by Cardiff-based education IT specialist Lisol, during the new term.

Sean Foley, Cefn Saeson's

information and communications technology and data manager, describes the system as a "streamlining of school bureaucracy".

"Ultimately, this is a first move towards a paperless administration, which has lots of ecological and environmental benefits too," he says.

"Pathways will allow staff to input and access data, and write reports, from anywhere.

"It's going to cut down on teachers' workloads. They will have easier access to documents because they will be online and this can be done from their own classroom, another classroom or even in their own time at home. The reports will be easier to edit, to store without filling cupboards full of paper and to keep so that teachers can track a pupil's progress."

Dyffryn Comprehensive School in Margam, Port Talbot, was the

first county school to use Pathways, adopting the system a year ago.

Deputy headteacher Cedric Burden adds: "A significant education agenda at the moment is extended hours learning and e-learning. The great thing about Pathways is that it's one environment where teachers can track pupils' achievements online. It's one piece of software.

"For instance, at the moment we're collecting grades on achievement and effort. In the past that data would have been written on paper or collected electronically and then staff would have had to analyse it, total it and distribute it.

"But now it's keyed in once by the teacher and the processes of distribution and initial analysis are done by the system."

Pathways is now in use in one in 10 schools across Wales but this is the first time an entire county has signed up to the software en masse.



No more files? Leyton Jones, of IT specialist Lisol, and Sean Foley, ICT manager at Cefn Saeson Comprehensive, Neath, (right) with year 11 pupils Emma Price and Michael Borland