

A COMPLETE SOLUTION TO TRANSITION AND MODERATION

Creating seamless links in primary/secondary transition and ensuring the accurate moderation of teacher assessments are at the heart of modern education.

And a state-of-the-art IT system, now installed throughout one Welsh LEA, is meeting both challenges, saving time and cutting down on teachers' workloads.

Lisol Voyager ensures continuity and progression for pupils moving from feeder primary to secondary schools and gives teachers an easy-to-use and flexible system to moderate and standardise assessments.

Designed by education IT specialists with guidance from teachers and staff in Caerphilly County Borough Council, Lisol Voyager has been described by teachers as the "only answer" to age-old problems of transition and new problems created by teacher assessments.

The system allows teachers to store and pass on academic and pastoral information safely and quickly without any paperwork. Computer files can be easily created in primary feeder schools and then passed to the secondary school before the pupils move up to Year 7.

Lisol Voyager also creates a system of moderating assessments to help schools and LEAs meet Welsh Assembly Government demands that assessments be fair and accurate.

It allows teachers to view examples of work and decide on what quality of work should be graded on different levels.

Cardiff-based Lisol designed the system while working closely with staff at Lewis School, Pengam. Now all of Caerphilly's 15 secondary schools, 79 primary schools and two special schools have Lisol Voyager up and running.

Mark Baker, deputy headteacher at Lewis School, described the problems they needed solved: "We are fed by 15 feeder primary

schools and it is very difficult to get all the information in about every pupil who is coming here at the beginning of Year Seven. “We were finding that we did not have any academic or pastoral information on the children joining the school, pupils we then had to make immediate judgements on regarding which sets they should go to and what they now needed to learn.

“With the demise of Key Stage 2 tests we also need to know that teachers are assessing pupils’ ability in the same way across our feeder schools. We need to know that children assessed to be at the same level of development can do the same things.”

Lisol Voyager, he said, made all the difference.

“Voyager has very much been developed with teachers in mind because we had input along the way.

“With Voyager we can look at a class of Year 7 pupils and know what it is they can do. We can look at a maths class, for instance, and know if they have done long multiplication. We can move them along quicker in Year 7 without repeating things from primary school, a problem which has occurred in the past because secondary schools don’t know what the pupils have already done.

“Schools in Caerphilly will now be able to accurately say, as the Welsh Assembly Government wants of all authorities, that we can produce teacher assessments which are consistent for every pupil.”

Information on all of the children joining Lewis School in September will be transferred using Voyager, he explained.

“When next year’s pupils come to the school we will have information about them all on the system. We will have some English and maths work on there, and a piece of writing from each pupil which all our staff will be able to look at and be able to see the level of the pupil’s ability.

“Nobody else has come up with an idea which deals with transition in this way. Nobody else has solved this problem and this technology allows for so much to be done so very, very quickly.”

Eventually, he added, parents of the school’s 1,000 pupils will be able to log on to the system and see examples of work from different levels of teacher assessment.

Lewis School worked closely with one of its feeder schools, Tir-Y-Berth Primary, in advising on the development of Voyager.

Tir-Y-Berth headteacher Debbie Hartevelde stated: “For me, as a headteacher in a primary school, the system has massive benefits. It not only serves as a management tool for my school, but also as a system that allows communications between my cluster and LEA and a point of access for parents and pupils.

“The environment is safe and reliable. Voyager also offers me the ability to be able to ‘post’ pieces of work that as a staff we can moderate together and that historically would have been done paper-based, and to store the activities for future usage.

“Because this system is electronic we know that the secondary schools are getting up-to-date and valid information from us about the pupils and that the information is going to the person it needs to get to.

“It is an excellent tool for induction of new staff.”

She added: “Voyager’s facility to work on the consistency of teacher assessments is very important to all schools in Wales at the moment because we no longer have SATs testing at Key Stage 2 to validate teacher assessment. That means we need to be able to accurately assess children’s attainment, all staff must be confident to accurately moderate pieces of pupils’ work.

“Voyager offers the opportunity to moderate a piece of work as an LEA, as a cluster and as an individual school, therefore ensuring complete accuracy across schools.

“Accurate moderation is the key to successful transition and progression in Year 7 .We already have excellent moderation procedures, Voyager enables it to be far more time efficient process, therefore supporting the workload agenda.”

Helen Atton, Business Manager at Lisol, said: “We are very excited about this new venture, not least because of the enthusiastic reception it has received so far, and recognise that our partnership with Caerphilly County Borough Council has been invaluable in producing such a well designed and effective system.

“We are confident that Voyager will be of significant benefit to schools and LEAs in managing the transition of pupils between key stages, and can help to address the difficulties many schools across the UK are experiencing in maintaining standards for moderation.

“Government has expressed concern about the lower attainment of Key Stage 3 pupils in comparison with Key Stage 2 and Voyager will assist enormously in ensuring that pupils work effectively as soon as they start secondary education, without repetition of work and time wasting in assessment.”

Notes for Editors:

1) Lisol is a Cardiff-based, education-focused company with bilingual staff intent on creating solutions that work for schools. A large proportion of its revenue is reinvested in continuous development. The business and products are client driven and clients are heavily involved in product development.

2) Lisol contact: Helen Atton, Business Manager, on 029 2049 1200.