

Log on to check your child's grades

PARENTS can now rummage through their child's school bag, check their grades and ensure they arrived at class on time – without even leaving the office.

Some might call it spying, or prying and it's certainly easier than nagging. But parents anxious to keep up with their child's progress can now do it daily rather than waiting for the end-of-term report card.

Simply by logging on to the school's intranet, some parents can now find out when their child will be expected to arrive with a clean PE kit and can check which letters have been sent home and when – rather than waiting for a soggy letter to be found at the bottom of a bag three weeks late.

The Pathways for Schools technology is being used in a dozen schools in South Wales, with support from Cardiff suppliers Lisol Education Service.

Dilwyn Owen, IT co-ordinator at Bro Morgannwg, the new Welsh-medium secondary school in Barry, Vale of Glamorgan, said parents are given a username and password and can then access specific areas of the site to check on their child's grades or even if they have been awarded merits that week.

He added that depending on

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And there's no need to worry about those lost notes from school

which parts of the software the school is using, parents can also check if their child turned up for registration and check their attendance record.

"We've set the system so that parents can see their child's timetable and if homework has been set and done," said Mr Owen. "We've also created a 'bottom of the bag' area where letters that tend to accumulate at the bottom of the pupil's bag are loaded onto the intranet too.

"All members can also send each other messages, so it could become almost like an online PTA. If a teacher wants to communicate with a parent, they can also send them a message. The great advantage of this is that you can access it from home, work, the library – wherever you access the internet."

As most lessons are now planned using interactive whiteboards and power point presentations, staff have also loaded their lesson plans onto the system, so

that if a child is absent they can download the lesson to their computer to help them catch up.

"It does make lifelong learning a reality because if a parent wants to brush up, they can look at what was taught in lessons too," Mr Owen said.

Marketing consultant Gwenan Llwyd Evans's youngest son Iolo is in Year 10 at Bro Morgannwg.

"We have a fairly active PTA but it's nice to keep in touch this way as people have such active lives," she said. "It's not always that easy for parents to get to the school so this makes us that much better informed, though there is a responsibility on the parents to use it properly as well."

The 51-year-old mother of three from Penarth added, "If I needed to check where Iolo was for some reason, I can do that now, and it's reassuring to know his records are there, all in one place, and you can go back to previous ones if you want."



WHAT DID YOU DO TODAY? Parents can access school intranet systems from home, office or library

It cuts our workload too, say teachers

YOU don't mind writing a pupil's report card during the holidays if you're able to do it from an internet cafe in Tenerife.

Which is exactly what Warren Davies, of Ysgol Gyfun Cymer in Rhondda, did last week while he was on his half-term break.

The teacher said, "The beauty of

this system is that teachers don't have to enter the data in school, they can do it from home. I was in Tenerife last week so went into a cyber cafe and did it from there."

Nick Francis, technology teacher at Olchfa School in Swansea, has also been impressed with the system. "It's not reduced the teachers' workload

by 100%, but it's getting there," he said. "When I came into education five years ago we had to add up students' attendance every week, then again every term, but this does all of that for us. And if you need to remind specific pupils about football after school you can just send a message to them or their teacher."