



## Enabling Teaching and Learning at Hardenhuish School (Case Study)

**A large 11 – 18 academy makes full use of SalamanderSoft products, in particular Salamander SharePoint, together with Microsoft Office 365, and Windows tablets, in pursuit of continuous school improvement.**

This case study catches the school at an early stage in the implementation process. It provides insight into the how and why of a school's decision to work with SalamanderSoft, and records the early experiences of teachers.

### The School

Hardenhuish School is a larger than average secondary academy, with 1600 students, serving the town of Chippenham and the surrounding area of Wiltshire. The school was judged Good in all aspects at the last Ofsted Inspection in 2013.

Hardenhuish is an ICT Mark School with a strong track record of technological innovation, and the decision to work with SalamanderSoft is evidence of the leadership's determination to seek out the technologies and applications which will most effectively support teaching and learning.

### Seeking a solution

A school that seeks to give its students and teachers the best and latest technology has to be not only up to date with trends and innovations but also aware of what's possible within an always tight budget. In many schools – Hardenhuish among them – this has led to a position where replacing ageing computer provision like-for-like is not the best or most cost-effective option. Matt Evans, ICT Innovation Manager at Hardenhuish explains the line of thought that developed within the school's staff/student ICT Strategy Group.

*"Some of our computers were getting old and we began to look at how we could maintain our position on the cutting edge. But about a year and a half ago we started to realise that straight replacement would be too expensive. At the same time, the Cloud was beginning to take off more and more in education."*

A student member of the Strategy Group, Adam Lloyd, then in year 10 was a particularly enthusiastic advocate of the Cloud. Now in Year 12, he recalls what he said then:

*"There's the idea of collaboration and all the different things you can do. It's a richer and broader experience enabling students to search beyond what they're being taught. And there are different ways of delivering the content."*

Adam was thinking of a Google solution, and actually posted a persuasive blog on the subject. Members of the Strategy Group visited a Google school, and concluded that though the Cloud was going to be the answer, Hardenhuish is an established Microsoft user, and as Matt Evans says,

*"Office 365 would be familiar to anyone using Office. And going with Google would have meant a fresh start, making our existing infrastructure redundant."*

The next visit, then, was to Broadclyst Primary in Devon, a Microsoft Showcase School. Experiencing the remarkable work going on there with Office 365, finally convinced the group that this was the way forward.

They were also impressed with Broadclyst's 'one-to-one' computer provision although, says, Matt,

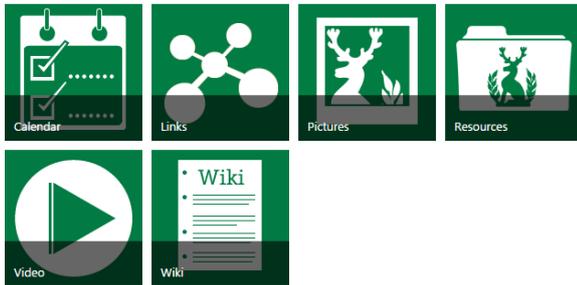


*“As we have many more students we couldn’t follow their policy of a desktop for each student, so this led us down the tablet route.”*

## The vision.

Based on their research and visits, Matt, and the Strategy Group as a whole, were clear from the outset that what they wanted for Hardenhuish was a cloud-based teaching and learning environment – a learning platform or portal - based on Office 365, together with one-to-one tablets for staff and students. The tablets would support Office 365 and vice versa.

By Autumn 2015, although the full vision still had to be realised, enough progress had been made to prove the concept and to show staff the significant possibilities for supporting their work in the classroom.



*Features for collaboration and student work inside a 'class' site, created and managed based on SIMS data.*

## Setting out on the journey

Matt and the team were clear from the start that they were not going to build the SharePoint Online portal on their own; they knew, too, where they would go to find support they needed.

*“We first bought a product from SalamanderSoft three years ago, but have continued to work with them ever since. The service they provided (much like the SharePoint service we have now) can be continually customized to suit the changing needs of the school.”*

*This is a key reason why we wanted to work with them on this project. We knew we would be able to work together to achieve what we had envisioned, and still have the ability to change that in the future for no additional costs. (other than our standard annual subscription). With that mind, we met them at BETT 2015 in January and asked them if they could do the same thing for us with SharePoint Online in Office 365.”*

Unsurprisingly, SalamanderSoft were already working along those lines and so within a week, Hardenhuish had a small demo test site to try, and the deal was done.



## Early days

The school returned from the 2015 Summer break to find their SharePoint portal up and running, with class and subject sites, adding up to an extensive collaboration area populated live with student data from SIMS. Yammer, available for use by students and staff, has become popular for exchanging news and ideas.



Personalised links to subject areas and other resources.

Achieving one-to-one tablets is understandably taking a little longer. Staff members, 120 in all, each have a Surface 3. The current plan is for all students to have an inexpensive Windows tablet – Linx 8 is the current preference – beginning with Year 9 in early 2016. During the remainder of the Autumn term 2015, the focus will be on implementing Windows 10 for classroom PCs and staff Surface devices.

Meanwhile, staff and students are already discovering the benefits of the new SharePoint Online portal.

## Classroom experience

It's clear that Hardenhuish staff have rapidly realised the value of one of the key features of the Portal, which is to allow quick interaction and feedback between student and teacher.

Tim Phillips, Computing teacher and Lead Practitioner in Technology is making good use of the

'Student drop box' facility – a student workspace to which the teacher has access. As Tim says,

*"The students upload material, the teacher corrects it and feeds it back using a feedback document."*

Giles Mason, Head of the ICT Faculty says,

*"In the ICT Department we've been waiting for a long time for the ability to have students submit their work via the internet anytime, anywhere. It becomes the virtual heart of the class. We share links and announcements and it adds to the way that students interact within the group remotely, sharing ideas and resources."*

*"The major push in this first year is using it look at work and feedback. Eventually we could reach a situation where students and teachers are editing collaboratively together. That won't be immediate, but it's a good goal".*

Giles points out that the Ofsted inspection regime places emphasis on feedback and the fact that inspectors look not only for feedback from the teacher, but evidence of response from students. Collaborative work in Office 365, meets that requirement and keeps the dialogue on record as evidence.

Giles is full of such ideas including online discussions, replacing traditional homework, and peer helpdesks.



Carla Fenwick, ICT teacher is also quick to see possibilities.

*“It’s very early days, I’m uploading lesson content and looking at apps and really looking forward to having it all projected on the screen. It will be fantastic when all the students have tablets, sharing work. And at the moment I cannot rely on the students having a device at home when setting ICT homework, but when students have devices their learning won’t stop when the students leave school.”*

Carla says that students are keen for teachers to use the technology,

*“They will tell me about lessons where they knew technology would have helped”*

David Clarke Assistant Head, shares the enthusiasm for better collaboration.

*“It’s a really useful tool for bringing teaching and learning alive. If I can flow to the screen something I’ve prepared it will hook them on to the next part of their learning.*

*The other key thing is the live tracking of progress, being able to see a paragraph and share why it’s good or make changes through editing, and perhaps slinging it to the screen. That’s exciting.”*

David has a broader vision, too.

*“We’ve always talked about encouraging a community of learning, but not been sure what we mean. Now we have the chance to tap into the confidence that young people have with social media – Yammer for example. It’s all better than work going into folders – it’s quicker and more exciting and we can all chip*

*in. I love the idea of saying, “I’ll be on Yammer between 8 and 8.30 tonight. That’s something I’d like to try.”*

## Summing up

The Salamander SharePoint portal which is now at the start of working up towards its full potential is going to meet a long standing need at Hardenhuish. The school has been seeking a technological route to becoming the ‘community of learning’ which David Clarke envisages.

Matt Evans describes how some years ago he and colleagues looked at various proprietary VLE products which turned out not to offer the return on investment that they were looking for. Even the free open-source ‘Moodle’, which the school still has, needs a level of in-house support which the team simply does not have time to provide. SalamanderSoft, and Microsoft Office 365 together cut through all of those barriers. Says Matt Evans,

*‘The pricing point is good, offering competitive value for money.’*

Most remarkable of all is the way that staff and students have begun very quickly to seize on the benefits for teaching and learning which are on offer.

## About this case study

This case study was written by Gerald Haigh in close consultation with the school.

For more information about how SalamanderSoft enables teaching and learning, please visit the website at [www.salamandersoft.co.uk](http://www.salamandersoft.co.uk) or contact SalamanderSoft directly to discuss requirements by emailing [Info@Salamandersoft.co.uk](mailto:Info@Salamandersoft.co.uk).

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