



Enabling Teaching and Learning at Royal Wootton Bassett Academy (Case Study)

A large and successful secondary school makes full use of SalamanderSoft integration products, together with Microsoft Office 365, to support teachers in their drive for continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

Together with accompanying gains and cost savings, the implementation provides a cost-effective example of how the right technology, appropriately applied, can empower already excellent teachers and add significant value and enjoyment to the learning experience of the students.

The School

Royal Wootton Bassett Academy, with 1600 students aged 11 – 18, serves the town of Royal Wootton Bassett and the surrounding area of Wiltshire. At the last Ofsted inspection, in November 2013, it was judged 'Outstanding' in all categories.

The school has a strong record of making full use of technology, always with the aim of supporting students and teachers in the core business of learning.

Assistant Head Steve Gillott, a teacher with a deep sense of what technology can do for a school, has led the school's early adoption of numerous Microsoft technologies, always in pursuit of better communication, collaboration and the management of learning. Along the way there has been a constant awareness of the need to work within a limited budget.

The Cloud and Office 365

It's hardly surprising, then, that when the Cloud seemed to be developing as a viable working environment for schools, Steve began to take notice.

'Cloud has been one of the main ideas being pushed at the BETT Show in recent years. But this year, and especially with Office 365, I felt I could no longer ignore it.'

Steve had his sights set particularly on the future of the school's extensively used on-premises Microsoft applications, particularly Lync (now Skype for Business), e-mail and their SharePoint learning management environment.

'The way that funding is going, every school is under pressure and looking at cost saving. By moving those key technologies to the Cloud, we saw that we could make a saving of two to two and a half thousand pounds a year just from licensing.'

Knowing the capabilities of Office 365, Steve knew that there would be further benefits beyond that basic saving.

'Office 365 takes away all the updating and maintenance issues, so we can focus on teaching and learning.'

Importantly, too, Cloud storage is almost infinitely greater than could ever be reasonably possible for a school's on-premises installation.

'Office 365 provides one terabyte of storage for each OneDrive user. With all of that we can start to look at things like using video on class sites that we couldn't do before.'

The way forward with SalamanderSoft

Moving to Office 365, while ensuring that the online applications were fully exploited, accessible and in line with the school's teaching and learning requirements was, in Steve's view, going to require outside expertise. The obvious choice was to use



SalamanderSoft, whose products had already been enabling the school to make the best use of their on-premises SharePoint and Management Information Systems.

“We knew their products well, and there was a strong element of trust. We knew we could rely on them to carry out our migration to the cloud.”

The main SalamanderSoft products involved in the project are Salamander SharePoint and Salamander Active Directory (AD).

Salamander SharePoint at RWBA.

Salamander SharePoint provides schools with a rich learning platform; a portal providing click-through access to student lists, class sites, subject and revision sites, and a range of individual tools for students such as drop boxes, OneNote notebooks and blogs. All of these feature on the RWBA installation. As Steve explains,

“There’s a common template, but it’s very flexible and can be tailored to the needs of a school.”

Subject sites at RWBA, for example, include a document library, a drop box for students to ‘hand in’ their work, announcements to students, and past papers for revision. The stand-out feature, across all parts of the SharePoint installation is ease of access. So, for example, says Steve,

“When I prepare a computing lesson, I can go to a set of document libraries and download the resources that students are going to need. Students of all abilities easily find the resources, and the process saves considerable learning time by comparison with what’s wasted by handing out worksheets.”

Perhaps the most significant feature of a Cloud implementation like this is the potential for collaboration in every direction between students and teachers. Steve gives some examples:

“A number of teachers can use a document at the same time – for joint research, or for preparing a resource to be shared by all members of the class. Students can also work together, researching and building up a project. OneNote has some great features to help with that, for example the ability to snip part of a web page and put it into OneNote along with the references.”

The possibilities here are endless; the teacher can share specimen exam papers, for example, and annotate them. Collaboration can also take the form of teacher/student feedback. Steve says,

“A particular feature of Salamander SharePoint is the way that SalamanderSoft creates a OneNote notebook for all students in all subjects.”

These become, in effect online virtual exercise books, which the teacher can monitor and comment upon at any stage. This, as Steve suggests, is a cultural shift.

‘It means the exercise book is no longer their own domain, seen only by them until they hand it in. Instead, it’s available to the teacher at the student at any time.’

And the experienced teacher in him shows itself when he adds,

“There’s no more ‘the dog ate my homework’, because it’s online and the teacher can see it as it’s actually being done.”



More seriously, perhaps, the online exercise book will stay with the student all the way through school.

“If we’re talking about progress in learning. We should be in a position to go through all of the students’ work with them. It will all be there; they can’t lose it, so when it comes to revision it won’t be just a year’s work that’s available it will be all of the content.”

As we shall see, the way that Salamander SharePoint enables continuous to and fro dialogue between student and teacher is gaining considerable traction with teachers at RWBA, and has the potential to transform the way that the traditional classroom works. The huge increase in available storage with Office 365 also means that these collaborative features can be extended to include video, audio, handwriting (with Surface inking for example). Steve is particularly taken with the idea of audio feedback for students’ work as a major time-saver in terms of marking.

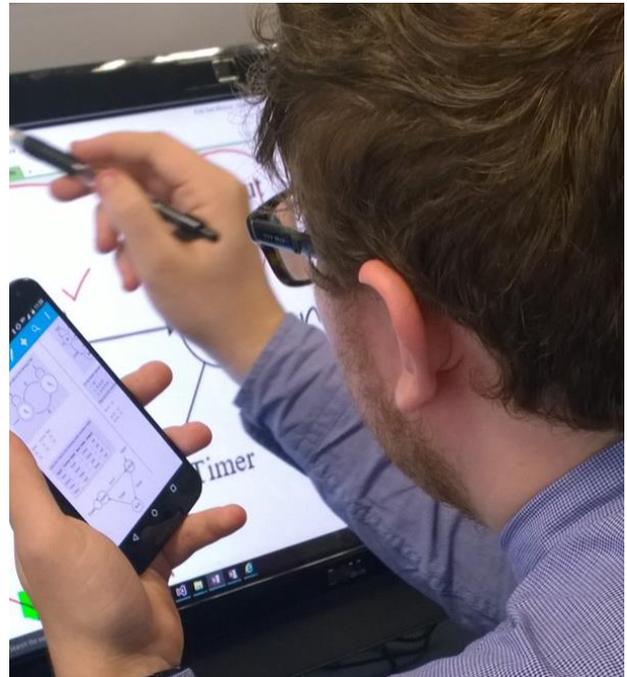
What do teachers say?

At RWBA, specialist teachers are quickly finding out how Salamander SharePoint and Microsoft technologies are meeting their particular needs. To observe Steve Gillott, teaching computer science, for example, is a remarkable experience.

In a traditional classroom the teacher sets the task and the students get on with it. Ones who run into trouble may or may not put up a hand to ask for help, but in any case it’s likely that errors – including some complete misunderstandings – will only show up when teacher sits down to mark the work. Steve’s method, though, is to keep checking individual student progress on his own device, using a pen to add corrections and suggestions which students see in real time on their own screens. When a particularly interesting point comes up, the process can move to the big screen for all the class to see. At times, a student may make a suggestion

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which neither the other students nor the teacher has thought of. Unsurprisingly, other teachers at RWBA are becoming increasingly aware of the possibilities.



Year 13 Computer student Laurence Jones interacts with his teacher with the aid of Office 365 and pen input. Laurence also has the same task running on his phone because he feels comfortable working that way.

Zach Ishani, Electronics teacher, who has been using Salamander SharePoint with a year Nine class adds his own take on the use of online OneNote class notebooks, which he calls ‘workbooks’.

“I find it powerful. When they produce anything for their project, they add it straight to their own workbook. It’s then easy for me to go in and review it. Feedback is instantaneous because I’m already in the work with them.”

Zach, like Steve, is interested in the possibility of using audio to provide more detailed feedback more quickly, for students who can have access on any of their devices. He finds, too, that the interest in what

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he's doing comes from a range of other departments. That's significant for future success and take-up, he feels.

"The more we use it the more we will find out about it and see that it's applicable for every department. They all see that they could use it and it's rare to come across technology where everybody has said, straight away, 'Yes, we could use it.' That's very powerful."

Paul Day, PE teacher and Lead Practitioner for Teacher Development, says, Currently, OneNote is being used to assimilate pupils' work within our Year 13 BTEC Sports and Exercise Science group. They have been given a template to set up their own OneNote e-workbook which they use to collect research notes. They are also required to produce PowerPoint presentations and video evidence of sports coaching, both of which they attach to their OneNote books as evidence for their coursework.

Paul has also discovered the advantage of instant feedback.

"The use of live marking against the pupils' work has been highly beneficial for them as formative feedback. I am also able to see how hard they working when they are set independent study tasks outside of lesson times. The use of OneNote has greatly engaged the pupils and they find it a highly positive way of working."

Paul's group use the mobile version of the application so as to continue work seamlessly out of school. The next step will be to use the camera within the app as a way of building evidence.

Neil Wilson, Head of Computing, also finds that now he can have easy access to the students' OneNote class notebooks to remove delays and

misunderstandings, keeping on top of any errors they make as they go along.

"I can see that the notes they are making are correct, whereas it's difficult to check what they are putting in a paper exercise book."

The handling of homework, too, has been radically improved.

"There are no excuses. I can look at a student's work in progress, and, for example, 'I can see you haven't started. Do you need help?' Or I can check the quality of their responses and give instant feedback. The whole process is immediate, and it removes so many of those organisational aspects that have nothing to do with actual teaching."

Salamander AD

Much of the back-office support for Salamander SharePoint at RWBA comes from Salamander Active Directory, which pulls student data from the management information system (Capita SIMS in this case) and presents it to Salamander SharePoint. The administrative tasks of adding new students, assigning accounts, managing software licensing are all handled by Salamander AD, on the basis of nightly updates. As Steve says,

"Salamander AD does the things that we could not do, for example each year the new intake will need user accounts, passwords work areas, and email setting up. The Active Directory will read it all from SIMS, make the accounts and set up the licensing."

A step into the future

Increasingly, leaders and observers of educational technology, concerned by stories of ill-conceived high-profile 'magic bullet' solutions, are

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emphasising that learning, not devices or software, has to lead the way. This implementation at RWBA, is a prime example of innovation wisely handled. It builds and improves on existing technology that itself has gradually evolved, driven by the imperatives of learning and teaching. So now, having observed and absorbed the possibilities of Office 365 Steve Gillott, has gone to a tried and trusted partner in order to bring the vision to life. With SalamanderSoft, a school can now take advantage of the considerable possibilities of Office 365.

“We’ve always known that Office 365 would be transformational and now with Salamander tools we’ve been able to harness its features to an extent that we could not have managed in any other way.”

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 or contact SalamanderSoft directly to discuss requirements by emailing Info@Salamandersoft.co.uk.