Holmesdale Technology College and The Malling School

Holmesdale Technology College, based in Snodland, Kent caters for 900 mixed learners aged between 11-18 years. The College and The Malling School have been federated since 2007. Under the Malling Holmesdale Federation each school retains its own separate ethos and identity as an individual school whilst benefitting from the increased funding, including leading edge, specialised technology, facilities and equipment plus highly trained, enthusiastic and innovative staff that close partnership working brings.

Each of the schools in the Federation has specialist status. At Holmesdale, the specialism is technology, encompassing ICT, design and engineering. The school focuses strongly on the STEM subjects of Science, Technology, Mathematics and Engineering and the STEM philosophy of project-based learning permeates across the very broad and varied curriculum at Holmesdale. The Malling School enjoys the double specialisms of Sport and Science. Here students benefit from investment in Olympic standard training and diagnostic facilities unrivalled in any school in the country. Malling Holmesdale Federation students therefore not only study all the usual curriculum subjects, but also have the additional opportunity to follow individual learning pathways which will equip them for careers of the future.

Michael Bright is the Virtual Learning Environment Administrator and has been working for the Malling Holmesdale Federation for the past 11 years. Here, Michael explains how Groupcall Emerge was chosen and implemented within the college.

"I first saw Groupcall Emerge in an article online and thought it looked interesting. At the time I was looking for a solution for our PE departments. Our staff had issues taking registers in PE lessons what with needing to get changed and managing numerous classes efficiently before heading out to the Hall, Gym, School field or even off-site for lessons such as Golf.

I visited the Groupcall stand at the BETT show held at Olympia to find out more about the product and to see a demonstration - I was impressed! Groupcall were the only company that provided an effective way to take registers on a mobile device as well as being accredited with SIMS allowing secure data to be handled effectively outside of the classroom.

Emerge looked like the perfect product for us, so we decided to embark on their free trial that was offered. We successfully piloted Emerge for a month and then decided to purchase Emerge for both of our school sites.
We were able to purchase the hardware through Groupcall which was an easy process. We already had numerous iPads as part of another project we were running and saw Emerge as a valuable asset to increase their overall use within our federation. We are now using Emerge on a mixture of devices including iPhones, iPods, iPads and Android.

We have tested and used the iPad and iPhone version, all with great success. The flexibility given to Senior members of staff has proven to be invaluable especially when students are out of lessons and need to be directed back to where they should be by accessing their timetable information which is instantly available."

Michael goes on to explain how the implementation, installation and training was carried out:
"The process was simple! The implementation and installation was extremely straightforward and Groupcall performed the install remotely at a convenient time for us and even trained us on how to set-up the devices using their unique ID as a method of security.

All members of the Groupcall team that we have spoken to have been very helpful, especially their technical department who completed the initial install as well as the recent behaviour and achievement upgrade that we are now using. Their after-sales service has been very efficient, always supportive and our calls are always returned in a timely fashion.

As well as saving valuable time at the beginning of a lesson, our Science and PE Departments have managed to extend their students learning outside of the classroom with the off-line registration feature. Science take trips to our School Lake and our PE teachers can take registration on the sports field with ease without having to worry about the registers being late. Our students have even noticed that the lessons are more dynamic now and they are not restricted to the class for the first 10 minutes due to the taking of the register.

The feedback from our teachers has been very positive. They have appreciated both the opportunity to use such a capable mobile device in their lessons and the freedom to teach from anywhere as before they were relying on a desktop PC or a rather bulky laptop. In fact, all staff who have been involved in the project have been impressed with Emerge and its ease of use. Even staff who are not confident on a computer have commented on its accessibility and the level of information that it brings directly into the teachers hands.

It would be hard to measure the physical cost and or savings involved as the benefits come from within the classroom. Any extra time that can be gained in a lesson for classwork or revision is more valuable than the £125 licence and also allows the teachers to keep the students on task all of the time.

Whilst our PE departments solely use Emerge for Registration, our Vice Principals have started to use the latest feature to resolve behaviour issues by looking at recent incidents between students as well as re-directing students back to their correct lesson. Our Vice Principals see a lot of potential in the behaviour and achievement features with the ability to add photographic evidence being particularly useful.

Michael concludes: "We would recommend Emerge to anyone who is looking for a mobile registration solution, or is already actively using mobile devices in their school as it will definitely increase their usable lesson time and overall teaching flexibility.

The overall success of Emerge has been better than I had ever expected and while our use is currently limited to our Science, PE departments and Vice Principals/SMT, it has been a valuable tool not just in general classroom use but also for 1-2-1 meetings with Parents, as the staff member has access to key information there and then on their iPad.

For further information on Groupcall's products and services or to arrange for a free trial, please contact us on:
020 8502 7344, email: info@groupcall.com or visit our website: www.groupcall.com