

School Background

Ashcroft Technology Academy, formerly known as the ADT City Technology College has 1281 pupils from age 11 to 18. Sponsored by Lord Ashcroft, KCMG, a great deal of investment has been made to improve the opportunities offered to the students at the London Academy.



The Challenge

Ashcroft Technology Academy was in search of a system which could enable students' parents to keep up to date with their child's academic performance - their marks, timetable and attendance - as regularly as required. Mike Smith, the Deputy Principal of the Academy explains:

"As SIMS is our MIS we naturally considered SIMS Learning Gateway (SLG). However we found SLG is far from offering the 'parent-friendliness' that MyChildAtSchool.com does. Besides not being user-friendly, we found SLG cumbersome, awkward to use and offering a user experience that suits more technical people."

As students' parents come from a range of backgrounds, some of whom may not be very familiar with IT, it was imperative that an intuitive, easy to use solution was found for this purpose.

The Academy actually reviewed SIMS Learning Gateway twice, thinking that the more recent release would be an improvement on the previous version. Discovering that the same issues persisted, they decided to approach Bromcom to see what they had to offer.

The Solution

Ashcroft Technology Academy found the solution that they had been searching for at the BETT exhibition, the annual education technology event. MyChildAtSchool.com was the most powerful yet user-friendly parent portal that they had seen, and they were also impressed that it could also be used as a stand alone product.

The main launch of MyChildAtSchool.com at the school was via an Open Day where parents were invited to the school to try out the system. Parent feedback was extremely positive and since the introduction the majority of parents log on regularly to access critical information about their child's academic performance.

Parents particularly loved the fact that they can check their child's attendance. Firstly, to make sure that their child arrived in school safely (for those who took public transport or walked), and secondly to ensure that they did not skip any lessons.

Reports can also be formatted and viewed as PDFs, allowing for the traditional report layout to be maintained.

The Benefits for Parents

Parents do not need to have a high competence in IT in order to use it as it has been designed to be accessible by all - *"The most parent-friendly portal on the market"* was one parent's comment.

Parents can access information about their child's attendance, grades, behaviour and even homework whenever they want and from wherever they want as it is browser-based.

The MyChildAtSchool.com homepage shows a snapshot of the child's school day so a parent can view on one screen whether their child has attended every class and what he/she is studying.

The school can broadcast important messages to all parents very easily. For instance school closures, sports day reminders etc., can be displayed.

The Impact

Before reports would be produced only a selective number of times per year. Now reports are produced more regularly and can be viewed at the parents' convenience.

Communication between the school and parents is improved, as is communication between parents and their children as parents are more aware of what their child is studying hence can take a more active role in their child's education. This in turn should motivate the child to perform better.

"MyChildAtSchool has increased the interaction between parents and the school. Parents are delighted that they can check that their child is present at school directly from their computer at home or at work. Parents no longer need to wait for Parents' Evenings or end of year reports to see their child's grades, and hence can be more responsive."

Mr. Smith recommends MyChildAtSchool.com to other schools seeking to improve pupil performance. When asked what other alternatives the Academy had considered and why they chose not to go with them, Mr Smith summarised the specific advantages of MyChildAtSchool.com over SLG and its important benefits:

1. Teacher'sWebFolder is a true application and not a collection of web parts in a Microsoft SharePoint Framework like SIMS Learning Gateway. Teacher's WebFolder has a custom designed interface specifically for teachers and therefore doesn't have the design constraints imposed by software using Microsoft Sharepoint either.
2. Unlike software formed by web parts, the Teacher's WebFolder application enables viewing of essential historic information on attendance as well as behaviour and assessment on the same screen used to enter the data, instead of having to flick between different screens.
3. SIMS Learning Gateway has a limited writeback facility to the database which can be frustrating especially in Assessment. Bromcom ensured that this would not be an issue, and teachers are not restricted to how much text they can write on pupils.
4. There is the added advantage of not having to incur Microsoft SharePoint license costs which is why Teacher's WebFolder is considerably cheaper.
5. As SharePoint does not support mobile devices, there is no way that products such as SIMS Learning Gateway can be used on iPhones or the iPod touch, which teachers using WebFolder can enjoy.
6. Hardly any configuration and no additional server hardware was required so staff were ready to start using it almost immediately. With its sleek and modern look and feel and easy navigation, it is a pleasure for staff to use rather than a burden.
7. Important data is summarised and analysed ready for staff to use without having to make calculations. Some data is even available in pie chart format – such as pupil behaviour which makes identifying problem areas a piece of cake!

For more information and to arrange a demo please contact the
Bromcom Sales Office on **020 8695 8080** or email sales@bromcom.com

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