

An Introduction to Learning Platforms

Introduction

The implementation of learning platforms needs to be seen in the context of the DCSF E-strategy. The strategy aims to set a direction for harnessing technology to support the transformation of learning and teaching.

What are the aims of the DCSF E-strategy

The aims of the E-strategy include:

- Increase the personalisation of learning opportunities
- Improve management and organisational efficiency
- Promoting greater parental involvement and engagement
- Promote internal and external collaboration



What is the requirement on schools and by when?

The expectation is that all schools will have introduced a comprehensive learning platform by 2010. This should provide learner support, including the use of learner tools, publishing tools, digital curriculum management and tracking of learner activity and assessment. As this is a wide ranging initiative it is likely that schools will be gradually carrying out full functionality of a learning platform over a number of years. For many schools 2010 might best be seen as the start of successful implementation.

What is a learning platform?

A learning platform brings a range of online tools and services to enable more effective ways of working within and outside the classroom. They can vary considerably, but every learning platform should provide a range of ICT-based functions:

Content management - enabling teaching staff to create, store and repurpose resources and coursework which can be accessed online

Curriculum mapping and planning - providing tools and storage to support assessment for learning, personalisation, lesson planning etc.

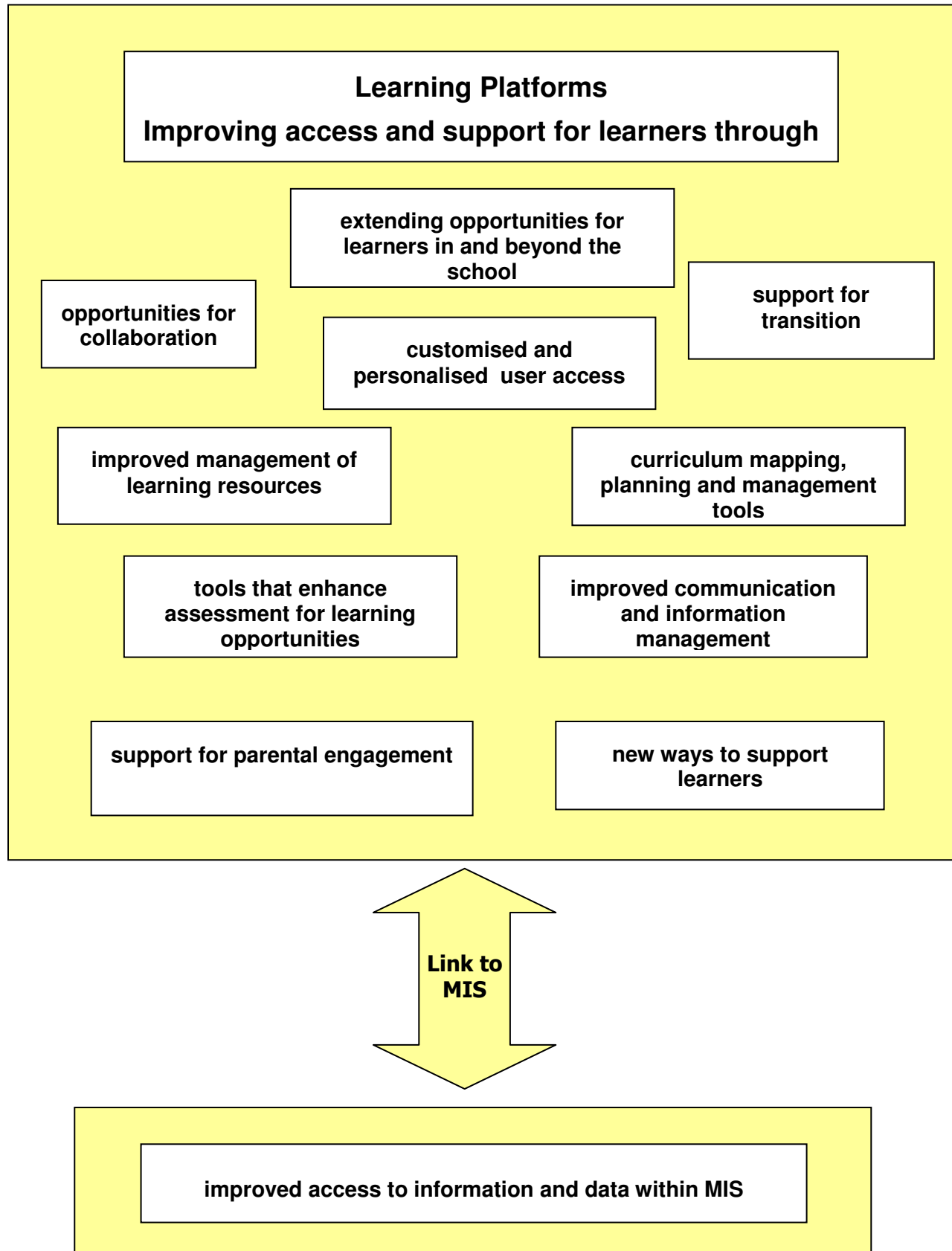
Management and administration - enabling access to pupil information, attendance, timetabling and management information

Collaboration tools and services - providing communication tools such as discussion forums, blogs and e-portfolios

A learning platform, therefore, is not so much a single 'off the shelf' product but a collection of tools that are designed to support teaching, learning, management and administration. It is web-based so provides access both within and beyond the school.

Many schools have networked ICT provision which enables pupils and staff to access information and resources within the school. The challenge now is to extend the school's network so that it offers access to learning resources, online storage and tools for communication and management not just within school, but from outside it too, through a learning platform.

What are the potential benefits for learners?



How can learning platforms support members of the school community?

Learners

- access learning materials and support in and beyond the school
- work from any location
- publish and share content online
- share and collaborate with others
- save and access work in a personalised online space
- access to extended opportunities for learning
- access to the school's digital content
- access to online discussions within a safe and secure environment

Teachers and Support Staff

- access and manage learning resources within and beyond the school
- share and collaborate with other professionals
- support pupil learning online
- access school information online
- access to communication and information tools

Schools Leaders and Managers

- support for communication within and beyond the school
- manage information for a range of stakeholders
- improved networking opportunities
- access to diary management
- access to centralised information

Administrators

- improved access to MIS systems
- enables creation and updating to learning resources and documents online
- share practice with others
- access to information from any location

Parents and Carers

- improved access to information
- access to homework and curriculum support
- opportunities to contribute to the life of the school
- support for parental engagement and improved awareness of school matters

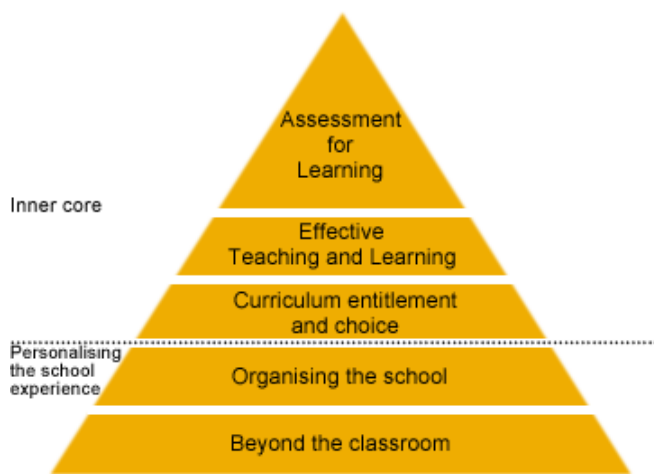
What is the potential contribution of Learning Platforms to support Personalisation?

Assessment for Learning

- peer evaluation
- online assessments
- Pupils sharing their understanding with a wider audience
- use of their personalised workspace to manage their work and show their learning journey to others
- pupil activity (and assessment) tracking
- improved access to pupil data

Learning and Teaching

- lesson and curriculum planning online
- linking planning content to national curriculum and objectives
- access, edit and create personalised content
- support for curriculum projects
- develop new ways of supporting learners



Curriculum Enrichment and Choice

- guided or self-study learning options for pupils
- access to online tools to support their learning
- access to extended learning opportunities
- access to content which matches learning styles

The five components of personalised learning (DCSF)

Beyond the school

- managing extended opportunities for pupils beyond the school
- opportunities to continue learning activities beyond the school day
- parental involvement in pupils' learning
- online reporting to parents/carers

Organising the school

- shared resources and management information
- communication pupils, parents, staff and stakeholders
- curriculum and management information located in one place and accessible online
- changes to the learning environment and how learners access opportunities

What will my school need to consider before purchasing a learning platform?

Where learning platforms are having a positive impact schools have considered some of the following critical questions:

- How do we see the implementation of learning platform provision supporting our wider school priorities?
- Who will take a strategic lead?
- What is the capacity of our school to take on this change?
- How will the roll out of a learning platform be managed across the school community?
- How will we share good practice?
- How effectively do we already use ICT to support learning, teaching and management?
- Is there a culture of innovation and consideration given to new ways of supporting pupils which enhance and add value to their learning?
- How will we ensure safe and secure access?
- How will we improve access for those members of the school community who have limited access to ICT?
- Well defined and controlled usage in the early stages is likely to be more successful than a full school roll out. How can this be best managed to ensure the long term engagement of staff and the wider community?

What other areas of school policy and practice will need reviewing?

When implementing a learning platform schools will need to consider their policies and protocols in relation to

- Use of ICT and its contribution to the life of the school
- Learning and teaching
- Parental partnership and involvement
- E-safety, security and use of data

Where can I find out more?

Further information can be found on the following websites:

www.surreymle.net/

Dedicated website for Surrey Schools regarding PLS and learning platform developments

www.fronter.co.uk

Website for the recommended Surrey Learning Platform provider

www.becta.org.uk/schools/learningplatforms

Learning platforms information on the Becta Website

Steps towards implementing learning platforms

- Review current practice and use of ICT systems
- Gather information regarding learning platforms to gain a view of their potential to support school improvement
- Discuss within SLT and with governors the potential timescales for implementation
- Consider how the use of a learning platform might support your school priorities
- Identify key personnel who will be involved in early implementation
- Talk to other schools in your locality or schools which you may be able to collaborate with on implementation strategies
- Consider some of the implications for managing this significant whole school initiative
- Select a learning platform provider, ensuring that you take into account total cost of ownership issues such as training, cost of administering the system, etc
- Consider some of the initial CPD needs for staff
- Begin to review key policy areas such as, e-safety
- Begin to define some short term goals e.g. improved access to school documentation, support for pupil learning within a specific curriculum project
- Share the early implementation plans for your school with stakeholders
- Begin to build practice within your school, sharing with other schools as appropriate
- Review your understanding of the potential uses of a learning platform and begin to define a longer term strategy for implementation, building on your earlier experiences
- Highlight ongoing CPD needs for staff and the wider community