The West Bridgford School chooses D2L’s Brightspace to deliver a more engaging, measurable and personalised learning experience

Introduction

As an academically outstanding school, The West Bridgford School (WBS) needed to upgrade its virtual learning environment (VLE) to enhance its existing education platform and deliver a more engaging, measurable and personalised learning experience to its 1,650 students. Having used a combination of both Moodle and a separate mark book and grading platform for a number of years, WBS found they were high maintenance, too rigid, and required too many clicks and logins for access, which led to incredibly low usage rates. By switching to D2L’s Brightspace, WBS had one system in place that matched its already outstanding level of teaching.

Organisation

WBS is based in Nottingham and is a high-performing school for students aged 11–18, regularly delivering results that place them amongst the best-performing comprehensives in the country at both GCSE and ‘A’ level. The school strives to ensure that all students realise their full potential and, as a caring school, values each student as an individual. With a school motto of ‘carpe diem’, WBS aims to enable all students to make the most of their educational experiences within a supportive environment.
The Challenge

At the heart of WBS’s success is a team of dedicated teaching staff who are all subject experts. Its teachers are well supported by associate staff to ensure students fulfil and exceed their potential, and grasp all of the opportunities afforded to them. The school recognised that technology is an integral part of teaching and learning, and, without using it effectively, could do its students a disservice.

Having used both Moodle and a separate mark book and grading platform for online learning, WBS felt they were neither flexible nor inspiring. Too many clicks, logins and a rigid structure meant that teachers and students were not always taking advantage of the technology available. In fact, WBS reported that only 10 percent of students were logging in a few times a week. Furthermore, WBS fully recognised the value of parental engagement and therefore needed a VLE that would engage and inspire parents, helping to foster a strong school-to-home relationship.
The Solution

In order to deliver the best technological opportunities to its students, WBS knew it needed to upgrade its VLE, so it switched from Moodle to D2L's cloud-based Brightspace platform. This move improved the learning experience by offering a flexible environment for both students and teachers to explore, learn and access information they needed through any device, whether a smartphone, tablet or desktop.

D2L's Brightspace is a digital learning platform that helps schools deliver personalised learning experiences in a classroom or online to students anywhere in the world. Created for the digital learner, Brightspace is cloud-based, runs on mobile devices, and offers rich multimedia to increase engagement, productivity and knowledge retention.

‘The students of today have every part of their life immersed in the most up-to-date technology, so it is only natural that their school life would reflect this. Students will very quickly lose interest with slow, high-maintenance platforms that appear out of date, therefore, we needed a modern platform that would inspire both students and teachers, and would be flexible enough to meet our specific requirements as opposed to making us conform to a rigid structure,' said Mark Deans, Deputy Headteacher of WBS.

“Brightspace has what no other provider has and our teachers have gone out of their way to adapt to Brightspace — usually we have to push these things through, but the staff are driving the implementation themselves. It's that spirit of adventure that you get when you use it, and you get a sense that D2L as a company have a culture that want to support us as a school to innovate, explore and continue doing exciting educational practices — despite it being a big organisation, they treat us like family.”

Mark Deans, Deputy Headteacher at West Bridgford School
The Results

By using D2L’s Brightspace platform, WBS is able to continue delivering the outstanding education that it has been giving its students.

‘So many companies in D2L’s field approach schools with their offering saying “this is how you use the product” even if it does not fully fit with the way the school works,’ continued Deans. ‘With D2L’s Brightspace, they asked us how we wanted to use the product and then tailored the product to our needs, which instantly showed that it was a higher-calibre organisation than many of its competitors. The company understood the flexibility required in education.’

‘Since introducing Brightspace we have seen a huge improvement — and it is genuinely exciting for us as an educational institution. Other tools stop organisations from innovating, but Brightspace actually pushes you to innovate more without tying you down to strict rules and structures. That’s what makes Brightspace so different to every other tool on the market.’

Whilst changing platforms can often cause integration challenges or friction from teachers, the Brightspace rollout at WBS has also been seamless with the teachers actually driving the transition.

‘Brightspace has what no other provider has, and our teachers have gone out of their way to adapt to Brightspace — usually we have to push these things through, but the staff are driving the implementation themselves. The teachers have particularly been enjoying the grading app. They can mark students’ work onscreen with written and verbal feedback via voice recording, and can even see how the students have responded to the feedback, saving them time and enabling them to engage with a generation that often feels more comfortable with technology.’

‘Even parents are using Brightspace with the parent portal, showing how easy and adaptable it is, which is key to our core value of making sure we are fully integrated into our community. It’s that spirit of adventure that you get when you use it, and you get a sense that D2L as a company have a culture that want to support us as a school to innovate, explore and continue doing exciting educational practices — despite it being a big organisation, they treat us like family.’