



Emerging Innovation in Education

The Harris School is a mixed Secondary School and Specialist Sports College located in Rugby, Warwickshire. Russel Brayshaw, Head of ICT, describes his experience with Groupcall Emerge.

Within my remit, I am responsible for seeking and implementing innovative and effective ICT solutions. When I initially encountered Groupcall's Emerge I was keen to establish how it would support the everyday management and overall workings of the school to facilitate staff members in their roles. As an existing Groupcall customer, using their parental communication program, Messenger, I was more than happy to trial their new Emerge product within my school.



Counting the Benefits

On first establishing the solution's role and key benefits, I identified that it would be effective for fire drills and rather than teachers having to take a hard copy register they would have their handheld device, which is of course hugely convenient. However, after familiarising myself with Emerge in greater depth, I realised that the potential benefits and opportunity for use extended beyond fire drill situations. There are a plethora of features that are infinitely valuable. These include the ability to write back to SIMS wirelessly, thus removing the requirement to input the information when back on-site. Other benefits are being able to take registration anywhere such as on school trips and also being able to access timetables and medical details instantly is infinitely advantageous, yet despite the extensive potential for usage it remains extremely simple to use.

At present, the majority of teachers have a laptop that they are primarily using to register students. The challenge here is that with SIMS Lesson Monitor, there is a requirement to log on, register and add a password, all of which needs to be completed whilst a class is sitting waiting and this is a time-consuming process. Also the logistics of trying to hold and use a laptop whilst standing is difficult and therefore inconvenient. In comparison, using the Emerge 'App' via an iPod touch is quick, convenient and practical for the teacher.

“As well as being able to take registration and saving so much time, we now have instant access to all student and staff information including timetables - all at the touch of a button on a pocket-size device - so much better than our laptops and we can use it anywhere!”

Logging in is a fast process and children can be marked absent or present straight away; a winner for classroom teachers.

Another particularly successful and beneficial use of Emerge is to follow-up on students' whereabouts. A key example of

this is the way in which our head of year 9 uses the solution to locate students. He often has incidents where he has to find a student immediately and if they are on the other side of the school this can prove challenging. However, with the Emerge device, he can locate a student anywhere in the school by accessing the really useful timetable function. It will tell him which lesson they are in, the room number, and also which teacher is taking the class. Emerge's ability to provide key information linked to teachers is incredibly valuable and truly makes the lives of staff a great deal easier.

Immediate, Accurate and Portable

Our Head Teacher, Steve Dobson, is extremely tech savvy and loves the concept of having access to this crucial data within seconds. With contact details of staff and parents immediately to hand in case of emergencies, such as a snow blizzard or a gas leak, we are always a step ahead. Furthermore, in terms of security, having this information stored on a handheld, portable device with individual log-in details is far more secure than the traditional method of transporting in a briefcase. With regard to its ability to support the decision making process, Emerge, delivers information in a quick and simple format which means decisions can be made quicker. For example, in an ideal world, each teacher would have their students' personal information, such as food allergies, medical details and educational needs saved to memory. However, realistically this is not always possible in situations such as when taking a cover lesson; Emerge is therefore hugely powerful in these cases as they can quickly look up and access key personal information. Of course we can locate this information but traditionally it would require making telephone calls and is therefore time-consuming and not always practical; speed is important and this is what Emerge from Groupcall offers!

Listening to the Sector's Needs

Groupcall has delivered continued support of a very high standard; adopting a can-do approach, the company has clearly listened and taken into account the feedback from teachers. The team has certainly done its homework; it understands the needs of schools and has subsequently designed a solution to suit the requirements of educators. Most impressive is that after first looking at and trialling the product, I suggested several changes for improvement from a teacher's perspective and these were made straight away and accurately.

In summary, Russell Brayshaw states:

“ Groupcall Emerge provides all of the key information teachers require and is available via SIMS. Furthermore it delivers it in a convenient, immediate and simple format. Emerge is not a complex product, but one that fits seamlessly into the teacher's school day (and pocket!) and makes life easier, which is exactly what a strong education-sector designed solution should achieve. ”



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