



# **FIREFLY & CATHEDRAL SCHOOL LLANDAFF**

Case study



# Introduction



The Cathedral School, Llandaff is a coeducational private day school located in Llandaff, north of the Welsh capital Cardiff in the UK. Originally established as a choral foundation to train choir boys for the affiliated Llandaff Cathedral, it is now part of the Woodard Schools foundation and continues to provide choristers for the cathedral.



We caught up with Jo Dinsmore, the Digital Platform Coordinator and Subject Lead for Computer Science, to discuss her experience of using Firefly alongside SchoolPost to streamline parent communications.



# The Challenge

We have been with Firefly for many years and the main reason our school initially moved over was for the tasks feature to replace the handwritten homework diary.

At the time, children wrote their homework in the diary and every week the parents would sign it, but it just wasn't happening. It was a constant battle between school and home, with the child in the middle playing one off against the other. My son for example would tell me he didn't have any homework and he would tell the teachers that we were too busy. Using Firefly to manage homework meant that the children couldn't wriggle out of it.

As a computer science teacher, an additional benefit of moving over was the fact that it really helped to have the lessons on screen rather than in books. I was able to move from a printed workbook to Firefly which made things both more flexible and easier because I could make changes at the last minute, and more cost effective and eco-friendly, as I was no longer printing out realms of paper booklets.



# Our Solution

## What are the benefits of the Firefly LMS?

We use it for things like revision resources and during exam times in particular. We have minimum requirements for each department, such as the scheme of work, programme of study and revision resources.

Departments use Firefly to varying degrees. For example, the computer science department and DT department have all lessons posted on Firefly. This is helpful when you are away as a colleague who is covering the lesson can just point the students to the lesson that you were planning to deliver. There they can find all the instructions and resources. Conversely, if a student is away, and they need to catch up on missed work, they can just be given the link to Firefly.

Firefly is also useful for end of topic or review tests, especially when you have lots of pupils. I use the Firefly assessments a lot as the pupils do the test and it is instantly marked by the computer, saving lots of time.

“ Firefly’s flexibility means that everyone can use the features that suit their needs and style of teaching.”





## Why did you move to SchoolPost?

SchoolPost has only been introduced in the last couple of years. In 2020 I was asked to take over the running of Firefly and to review how it was working. One of the things that we really wanted to focus on was the communication with parents.

At the time we had three separate Firefly sites for infants, juniors and seniors. The problem with that was that we had a lot of parents who had children in the three different sections which meant logging in to three different sites to access the relevant resources. We wanted to bring it all under one site as well as look at how we could streamline communication.

We also had a paper calendar in the form of a little booklet. It included fixtures and concerts along with all sorts of other events. The challenge was that because things would change or be added all the time, the minute the calendar was printed it was already out of date.

**“ We’re such a busy school with so much going on and our communication was all over the place. Parents were getting bombarded with emails and missing important information. ”**

**“ We wanted to find a way to put the calendar online where it could be easily updated and have all the key bits of information for parents in one place. ”**



# What improvements have you seen from using SchoolPost alongside Firefly?

## Concise weekly email

SchoolPost was an ideal solution as it links so perfectly with Firefly. Once we had learned how to use it effectively, we developed a strategy for communicating with parents, which is called the Thursday evening mail dump.

We organise all our communications so that every Thursday evening at 6:00 PM, the school sends out an email on SchoolPost. All the communications for parents are in this one email. It will contain the links to all the different letters, and they are all clearly named with the year group and the group of children. This way a parent can look at it and just click on the ones that they need to see.

## Staff informed of parent communications

An additional benefit is that the email is also sent to staff which didn't happen beforehand. Staff didn't know what was getting sent to parents unless we sent it personally. So now, as a member of staff, if I need any information about anything that's going on, I can look at that as well.

**“ It's has really streamlined everything and taken away a lot of the angst and conflict for parents. It's also difficult for parents to turn around now and say that they didn't know about a particular event.”**

## Teachers can send messages

If as a teacher I want to send a message to the parents, I now have to send this message to the office by a particular deadline for them to collate it and add it to the Thursday mail dump. This makes us all be a little bit more organised.



## What unexpected benefits have you found?

### Going paperless

Before Firefly, I would be printing out an A4 booklet for every pupil, for every topic. That's thousands of pages and now it's all on Firefly. Plus a lot of the homework we set is on Firefly and the pupils do it electronically and submit the documents electronically. We then mark it on Firefly and put the feedback straight on Firefly so that it's totally paperless.

### Selling tickets

It's really helped with things like when tickets go on sale for events. Parents were complaining because a letter would get sent out at 10:00 am and they were at work. Parents who were at home could book all the tickets up quickly, whilst the parents who were at work couldn't access it until the evening, and by then they were all sold. Now because that email goes out at 6:00 PM, it means it's a level playing field for just about everyone.

### Events planning

Putting the calendar on Firefly has made life so much easier and we've now developed a strategy where we use a Microsoft form for staff to add events. We have a cut-off date for this form and staff can put in all their events which populates an Excel spreadsheet. This is turned into a CSV file and uploaded to the system.

It makes planning events easier because you have more of an idea of how busy things are. If you need to put something in at the last minute, like say if the students won a competition, you can easily see what else is going on in the school. We also no longer need to have the little booklet formally printed anymore. All of this means that there are less clashes of events and less complaints from parents that they didn't know what was going on.

**“ Overall moving the calendar on to Firefly has been a positive step forward and SchoolPost has been a great move for streamlining communications. We're still chaotically busy, but at least everyone knows what and when. ”**





# Working with Firefly

## How easy is it to set up?

We've got a quite a large number of core staff who are familiar with Firefly and they teach their colleagues in their faculties. We've also got responsible people in each faculty that maintain their faculty sites.

Although I have oversight of Firefly, I don't have to go through everyone's page and edit them because everyone looks after their own pages. All I do is scan through every September and scan for pages that are outdated and need replacing. I don't find it particularly onerous. It's very easy to archive tasks and because Firefly talks to our MIS, all the classes and timetables are automatically updated.

**“ If you don't know how to do something, the Firefly Help pages have excellent screenshots and lots of information which is very straightforward to follow. I have rarely needed to call in for help, although that option is available.”**





# What are your future plans?

We recently started using SchoolPost to merge individual documentation on the Firefly pupil profile. We were already displaying school reports on the profile, which are pulled from the MIS, rather than sending home a paper copy. Now we can use SchoolPost to merge important documents such as individual exam timetables to their profiles, which the pupils and parents really appreciate.

“ The feedback from parents and pupils has been really positive since merging documents such as individual mock exam dates and timetables on the student profile. ”





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