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Welcome back

Well, what a busy few months we've had. With the DfES directive on Attendance Codes and the change to 1st language codes we have all had a number of statutory changes to deal with. It's not just been the DfES making changes, Capita have been upgrading their software applications; Assessment Manager 7 has been rolled out to the AM7 Secondary users group which thus far has proved to be successful. Full 1-day courses have been delivered on SIMS.net Reporting and details of SIMS.net Intermediate & Advanced Reporting courses have now been made available for the coming months. Our first SIMS.net SEN Behaviour Management & Exclusions course was a success with positive feedback from all the delegates. We are also formally deploying SIMS.net release notes to all schools via the MI Portal; the last Release note to go out was the 7.86 November main release, which included information on admission changes etc. So what now?

2007 has a lot in store for us i.e. automated and remote upgrades in primary schools. SIMS.net release notes are being sent to primary schools via the MI PORTAL followed by an automatic SIMS upgrade a week later where schools have servers. Remote upgrades will be scheduled for primary schools who have master workstations.

SIMS.net applications are being upgraded this year, which include Assessment Manager 7, Attendance 7 & Personnel 7. Project planning is taking place to deploy these applications to schools so look out for the seminars taking place in the coming months. FMS SQL has been a big talking point for all supporting boroughs. Aug 2007 is currently the deployment date for FMS SQL, but with no documentation or demo's yet available we expect that users will see no initial difference, this is probably due to most changes being made to the back end database. This will bring FMS in line with the rest of the SIMS.net software suite.

Lastly, dates have been set for the release of the SIMS.net Timetabling application Nova T6. The first course has already been filled. Letters have been sent to secondary schools but if you are interested then please do not hesitate to contact the Schools IS Team via sims.els@bexley.gov.uk

Thank you

Jason Tobias

Schools' IS Services Manager



Hurst Primary School leads the way in SIMS.net Assessment Manager

Assessment Manager has been running at Hurst Primary School as its main assessment tool for approximately one year now. Because pupils and their details automatically display via SIMS.net, Tracking Sheets, Key Stage data, Teacher Assessment data and internal school-based assessment has been recorded, tracked,

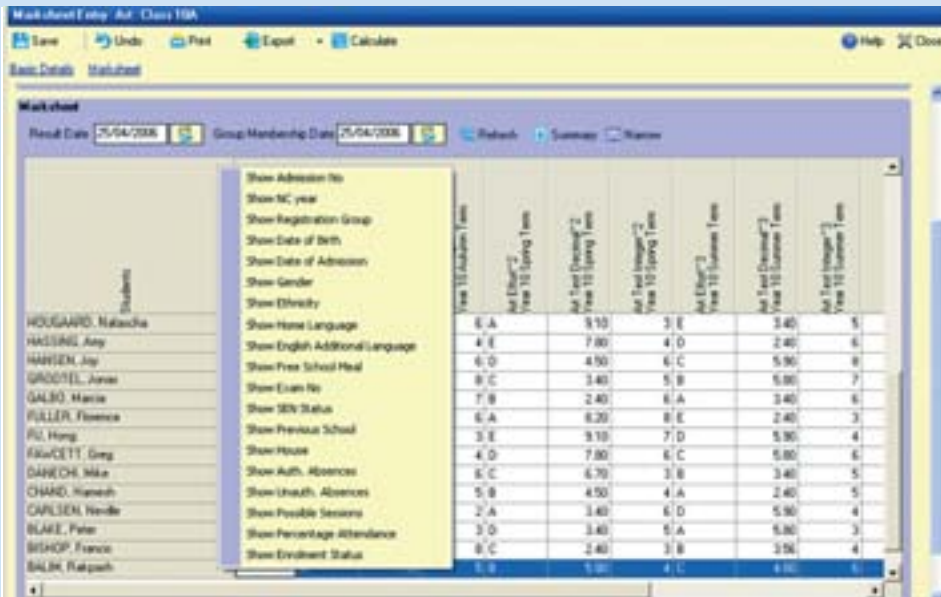
monitored and then evaluated to fully support the pupil, the parent and the teacher.

Pupils' progress is being monitored using Assessment Manager over the three terms and then subsequent years. Even the differences between pupil results achieved in the three terms are being configured automatically to

work out the difference and display this as a positive or negative value in a coloured cell. "This makes it a lot easier to see who needs attention and whom to target for help" a member of staff has stated.

Hurst hasn't stopped there, the data is then prepared via Assessment Manager in Individual Reports and then sent to parents as a Pupil report. This helps keep parents up to date and as set out as in the DfES white paper "Higher Standards". This supports the idea of "All parents have the right to regular and high quality information about what their child is learning, how well they are progressing and areas for development".

An Assessment Manager 7 Seminar will be taking place in the near future so please feel free to contact the sims.els@bexley.gov.uk for further details.



Is there an area of SIMS that your school uses particularly creatively? If so please let us know (020 8836 8200) and we'll be pleased to feature your school in the next issue of "Simplicity".

Even more support from April 2007

Returning to work from our Christmas and New Year break, we have already been planning how to improve the service we offer to schools. Building on successful developments since April 2006, the Schools' IS Services Team is pleased to announce two important improvements to the service from April 2007.

Remote support has proved to be a great success for both the 70+ schools who consented to its use in 2006/7, and for our team! Not only have we been able to resolve problems after school staff have gone home, but we also regularly provide remote demonstrations and training to school staff. School administrators and leaders have commented that they are receiving support more quickly, and are learning more about SIMS by working collaboratively with Consultants to investigate and resolve problems.

As a result of this success, we have updated the Service Level Agreement from April 2007 to state that we assume schools will want us to use Remote Support. Schools are still able to opt-out of remote

support but this will incur an additional charge (as detailed in the SLA) so as to cover the additional costs of supporting the few schools who do not consent to our use of Remote Support.

Secondly, following requests from many schools and school staff, we have extended the hours of our service desk which will be open from 8:30am from 1 April 2007! As ever, our aim is always to have calls answered by consultants but sometimes this is not possible and in these circumstances your call will be received by our voicemail system. As soon as a consultant is able to discuss your query with you he/she will call you back and attempt to resolve the problem. Please do remember that even at times of exceptional demand, we have only four staff available to support our 83 schools!

We are confident that increased use of remote support and increased availability of the service desk (from 8:30am!) will be of great benefit to you and your schools, and we look forward to working with you throughout 2007!

Personnel 7

The New Year introduces Personnel 7, which replaces the Personnel 5 module in SIMS Launcher. Personnel 7 uses the same user interface as SIMS.net & so all staff details are entered directly into SIMS.net which removes the need to use the Personnel 5 module along with Synchroniser to update staff details in SIMS.net.

You will be contacted over the Spring and Summer Terms to be advised of when a Support

Consultant will be visiting your school to run the conversion to Personnel 7. This process will include a data check, activation of personnel 7 plus conversion of existing data held in Personnel 5. Schools are able to select which data they wish to keep as well as what to view in Personnel 7. We shall be running training courses alongside the activation of Personnel 7 & each school will be invited to attend at the associated time.

LGfL Update

(please share this with your technical support staff)

Learning Platform

The Digital Brain update has reached Bexley and your home page should now have a new look.

But the changes are more than skin deep!

- ▶ The email pages have been enhanced to allow import of contacts from other email clients such as Outlook.
- ▶ Contacts can also be 'Browsed' from your local groups e.g. Staff, Pupils etc. (this is restricted so pupils can't browse Staff!)
- ▶ The Calendar has Month, week, 5 day and day views.
- ▶ Recurring appointments can now be entered!
- ▶ You can import and export appointments, so it is now possible to synchronise with Outlook.
- ▶ Tasks are now included in the application and can be displayed with the calendar.

Infrastructure

As you may be aware the infrastructure (fibre, aggregation points etc.) are provided for LGfL by Synetrix. Synetrix uses Thus telecom to provide fibre links and they in turn subcontract to BT. Recently Ofcom has made BT restructure its business to allow more visibility and open competition. BT has responded by withdrawing the existing portfolio of products, including the LAN Extension Service (LES) and offering a new portfolio including Wholesale Extension Service (WES). None of this affects the current circuits and everything should keep working. However because this is a new portfolio, should a school make a major change such as upgrading from

10Mb to 100Mb the only way to do this is by cancelling the LES 10Mb and taking a new contract for a WES 100Mb with the additional cost this will incur. Obviously this is far from ideal and LGfL, Synetrix and Thus are talking to Ofcom about the impact this will have on schools. It is expected that some agreement will be reached in the early part of next year (March/April) and more reasonable methods of upgrading will be available. For the moment then the advice is wait until next March before making any changes.

URL Filtering

Although the Netsweeper product used by LGfL is one of the leading products in its field, it should always be used alongside sensible and vigilant monitoring of pupils' access to web based materials in school as new sites with offensive material are being generated daily.

The advice from the curriculum and ICT support teams is to test links and searches as part of the planning process before the pupils use them, and to supply the class with a list of suitable URLs for the lesson topic. Pupils should be supervised, particularly when they are using the Internet for research and should be made aware, regularly of the expectations of the school's Acceptable Internet User policy, which will include a reference to pupils' own responsibility for appropriate usage of school resources and equipment.

If a web page is found that contains unsuitable material, please record the URL (address) and ring on the council number and report it to extension 4200. The URL can then be barred throughout the LGfL and prevent other schools from having problems.

A New Arrival!

Congratulations to Jason & Sarah on the birth of their first son Jacob. Wishing them all the best for the future!

SIMS.Net SEN / Behaviour Management & Exclusions

Our first SIMS.net SEN Behaviour Management & Exclusion Training Course was delivered at the beginning of December and proved to be a success with all delegates. This course will be repeated during 2007 and details will be published in our next Training Brochure.

How will using the Behaviour Management areas of SIMS.net benefit your school?

- ▶ You can record, monitor and manage the behaviour within your school.
- ▶ It is separated into three areas – behaviour, achievements and detentions.
- ▶ The behaviour area is used to record incidences of misbehaviour, such as disruption, bullying, etc
- ▶ The achievements area is used to record for example, excellent exam results, representing a sports team or incidences of positive/commendable behaviour
- ▶ Behaviour Management also includes the facility to record and maintain detentions
- ▶ Each behaviour incident or achievement can be allocated a number of points with a cumulative total for each, recorded against the pupil/student across the time they are in the school. This enables schools to monitor and compare points for both behaviour and achievements.

Improvements to Registrations and Admissions within SIMS.net

There have been some changes to the Registration and Admission areas in the SIMS November release 7.86, this article outlines some of the changes that you need to be aware of.

- ▶ The terminology has changed. Pre-admission pupils/students are now known as applicants and have an application. Pre-admission groups are now known as admission groups.
- ▶ Prior to the SIMS 2006 November Main Release, a pupil/student record was created in the database when the pre-admission pupil/student (now applicant) was accepted. Following the upgrade to the SIMS 2006 November Main release 7.86, only when an applicant is admitted will a pupil/student record be created. This directly affects Reporting as the data Focus of Application will now need to be used.
- ▶ Admissions Set-up changes - There is a new menu route for this area - **Tools | Admissions | Defaults** where some of the changes include – Admissions No. Prefixes, Multiple Admission Groups under one Intake Group and Withdrawal Information is no longer mandatory.
- ▶ The route to adding an Admission Group has changed – **Routines | Admission | Admission Groups | Setup** (previously this was Routines | Admission | Pre Admission Groups), there are also

some improvements in this area. You can now delete an intake group, the intake group details page now shows the intake group together with any admission groups linked to it, this helps against the need to re-enter intake group details when adding any additional admission groups.

- ▶ The way that you accept an offer has changed – **Routines | Admission | Accept Applicants** (previously Routines | Admission | Accept Students). This has a few changes within it where the default view shows applications with a status of offered, applications can now be moved directly from applied to accepted without the need to change to offered.
- ▶ Applicants can now be moved between admission groups, for example if you wished to move an applicant from an Autumn admission group to a Spring admission group. There are also some deletion options for Applicants (which are provided in the December update) and Intake/Admission Groups.

The above changes are the main aspects that have changed. If you require full documentation on the changes please contact us. At the back of this newsletter there is a quick reference sheet to assist with some of these areas.

SIMS Upgrades

Capita have moved to an upgrade regime of four main releases each year (February, May, August and November), with a series of interim updates issued between these main releases. The net result of this strategy is that there is an upgrade to SIMS .net issued around once a month.

To ease the distribution and installation of these updates, they are now delivered via the Internet using a process called SOLUS2, the SIMS OnLine Update Service v2. This process has been automated in 35 schools so that upgrades are applied automatically overnight with no user intervention required.

For other schools, we can simplify the upgrade process down to a double click of a desktop icon, which will then run the upgrade automatically with no further user interaction.

Following user feedback, we have formalised a process to ensure that schools are aware when these upgrades are available to be applied and that the release notes from Capita are made available in advance of the upgrade being applied. This information will be posted to schools via the MI Portal, the approved secure electronic link between Bexley Council and Schools.

SCHOOL CENSUS



Many school colleagues attended the School Census workshops we provided during November and December 2006. As promised, following this training we distributed to schools step-by-step instructions for the completion of School Census and we hope you find these useful.

If you did not receive a copy of the instructions please call the Schools' IS Services Team (020 8836 8200) who will arrange for a copy to be sent to you.

As ever, if you have queries relating to the data to be submitted as a part of your School Census please contact **Diana Quatresols (020 8836 8327)**. If you have queries relating to SIMS please contact the **Schools' IS Services Team (020 8836 8200)**.

Good luck with your School Census!!!!!!

SIMS Up and Coming Courses

(All course dates listed below)

SIMS .net Core including Basic Reports Course

New to SIMS .net or never had formal training? If so this course is ideal for you. It will get users with zero knowledge up and working with the SIMS .net Management Information System to be able to use it on a daily basis.

SIMS .net Reporting Courses

Do you have the need to produce Report's from SIMS that give you more information than the Pre-Defined Reports? Are you fed up with spending too much time creating letters to send out to parents, and want an easier way? Want a quick way to get statistical information from your precious data? Already create Report's in SIMS .net but want to do more with them?

Then you might want to book onto some new courses that we have devised!!

SIMS .net Reporting – Getting Started (half day) - Ideal for new users and also users that have not had any formal Reporting training. This course includes - Managing Reports, Running Reports, Editing Existing Reports, Creating from Scratch, Basic Mail Merge and an insight into some of the other available features.

SIMS .net Reporting – Intermediate (half day) (Following on from 'Getting Started') - Suited to users that already have basic SIMS .net Reports experience and are confident with Creating/Editing Reports, Adding Filters/Sorting Orders and manipulating output formats. This course will take users towards being able to create more complex Reports and understand additional areas in the Reporting module such as Sub-Reports and user templates.

SIMS .net Reporting – Advanced - (half day) (Following on from 'Intermediate') - Feel that you know most things about the Reporting module but still want to do more? The Advanced course steps up the game delving into

such areas as writing Macro's into Excel to create pivot tables and automatic graphs, complex RTF reports and more.

PLEASE NOTE!

For all of these courses it is essential that delegates have **basic** knowledge of Microsoft Office packages, E.g. Word/Excel, especially for the Intermediate & Advanced courses.

We strongly advise that users that have had relevant experience with SIMS .net Reporting to book on the Getting Started course rather than going straight for the Intermediate. This is to ensure that you get the most out of the training and do not feel out of depth, and lays the foundations for the further courses. The Reporting courses all follow on from each other, and are all half day bite-size chunks to make it easy to manage if you wish to go on all of them.

If you are interested, but unsure of which course to book onto please do not hesitate to speak to us for advice (contact details on the front cover).

Up and Coming SIMS Courses at Hillview

Course Name	Date
SIMS .net CORE & Basic Reporting	Tuesday 30th January
SIMS .net Reporting – Getting Started	Wednesday 31st January
SIMS .net Reporting – Intermediate	Wednesday 7th March
SIMS .net Reporting – Advanced	Wednesday 25th April

We do have more courses running as well as these, for information on these please see out Management and Administration Information Systems Training Courses brochure.

Service desk

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