

February Online Update 2



What is it?

The school site will be closed to students from February 7th-22nd 2009 whilst the move into the new school building takes place. This period includes the normal end of term break plus one further week when students will be unable to attend school.

During this period students will be encouraged to work flexibly, at a time and place that best suits them. A programme of 25 hours of study will be made available online through the school learning platform (UniServity).

Term 4 will begin on Monday 23rd February.



Why are we doing it?

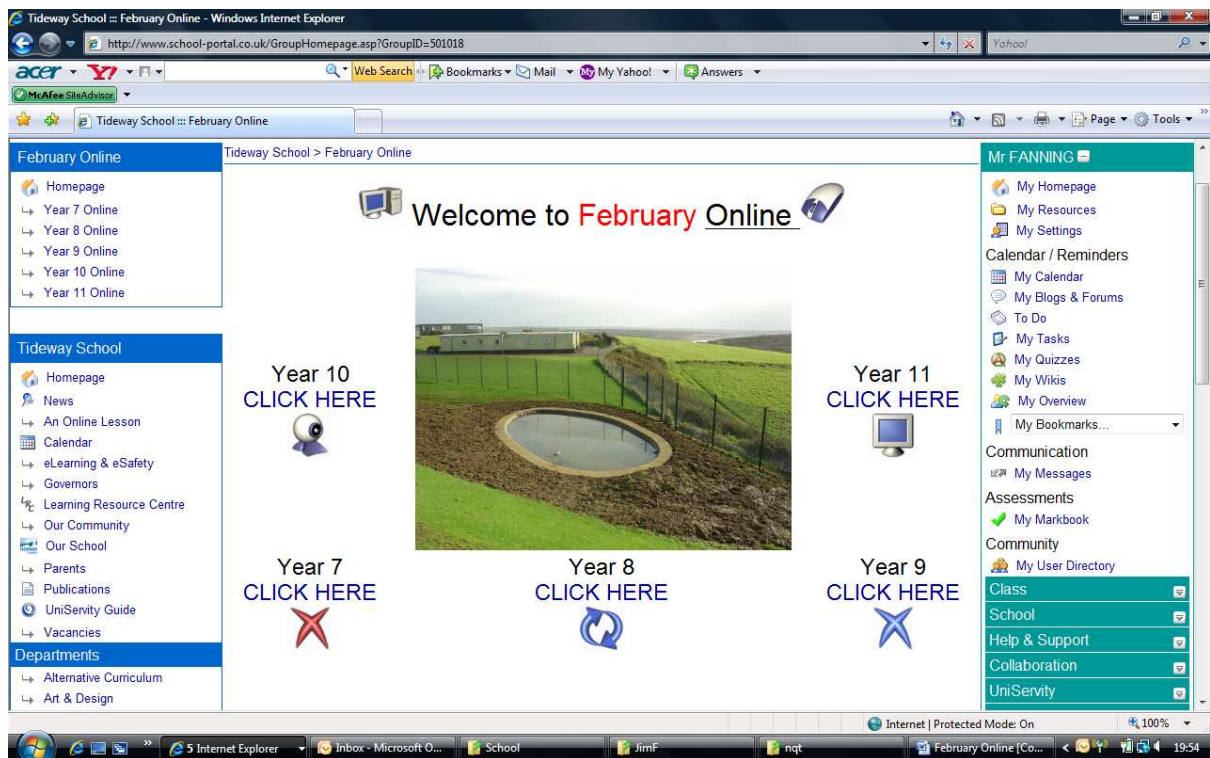
It will give staff, students and parents the opportunity to explore and better understand how the learning platform can be used to enhance teaching and learning.

Most of the research into the use of learning platforms has taken place in further and higher education. Very few of these research findings are applicable to the secondary school classroom.



How are we doing it?

Key Stage 4 students will access curriculum based lessons on UniServity. Subject leaders have been briefed on this and a specimen lesson has been circulated from Business Studies. By the end of November each subject area will submit a lesson plan and resources to Jim Fanning, when he and Will Hughes will then design the KS4 online classroom.



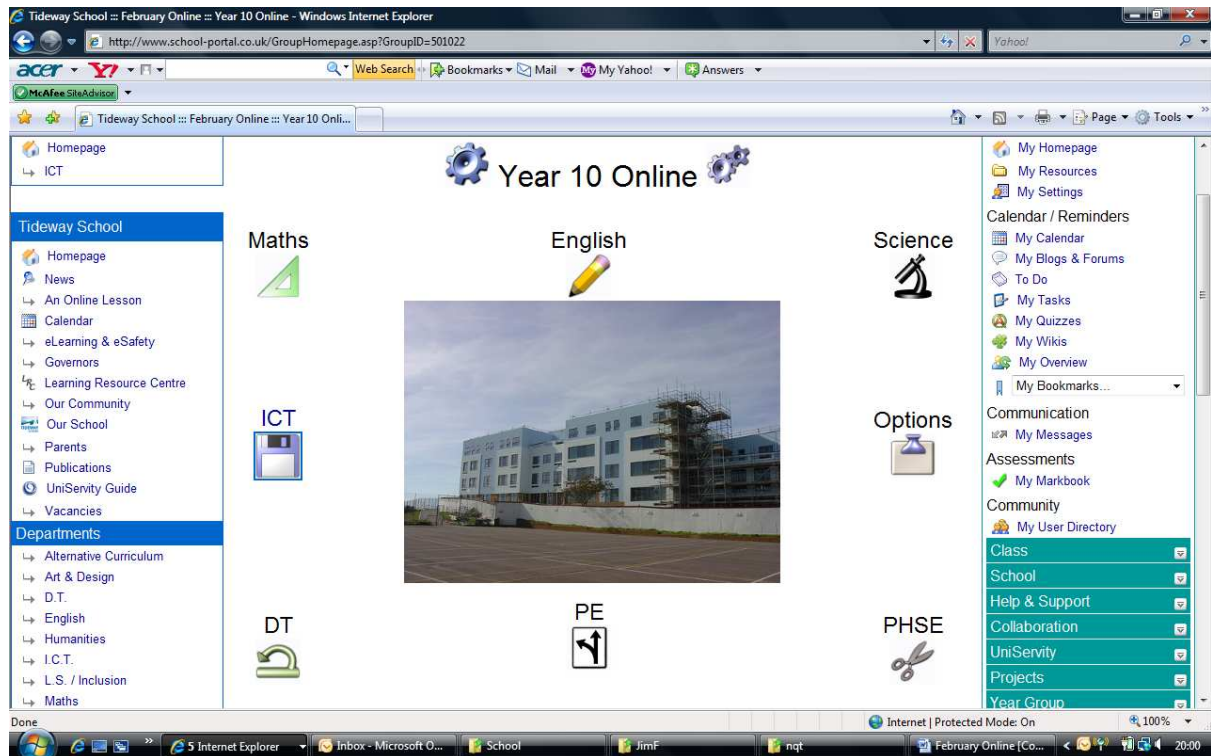
Discussions are taking place about the format of Year 8/9 lessons and the current suggestion is that both year groups follow a common project in each subject area, with material suitably differentiated for the different ages and abilities.

The aim is to have draft areas for KS3 and KS4 up and running by the end of December 2008.

In January 2009 staff and a small team of Year 11 students will have the opportunity test the technology prior to the site being launched on Monday February 9th.

Staff and student feedback will be used in an end of project report.

Questions



? What about students who don't have home access to the Internet?

A whole school survey of home access to technology has just taken place, with the results due at the end of November. This will allow us to plan access to the Internet in and around the town. Mariea Christodoulou will also co-ordinate the preparation of a paper based pack for those students who will not or cannot access the Internet.

? When will students complete work and how do we support and monitor them?

Students will complete their work at a time and place of their choosing. The learning platform allows us to monitor who accesses what resources and for how long they are online.

Students, by arrangement with staff, can upload completed work to the learning platform, email it or supply it as a hard copy.

We need to decide how support, both face-to-face and online will be provided. When students use Internet access points in public places in and around town they will have to be supervised by staff.

Online support can be provided through email and forums, but again these need to be moderated and checked by staff.



How will this project impact on what we normally 'do' in school?

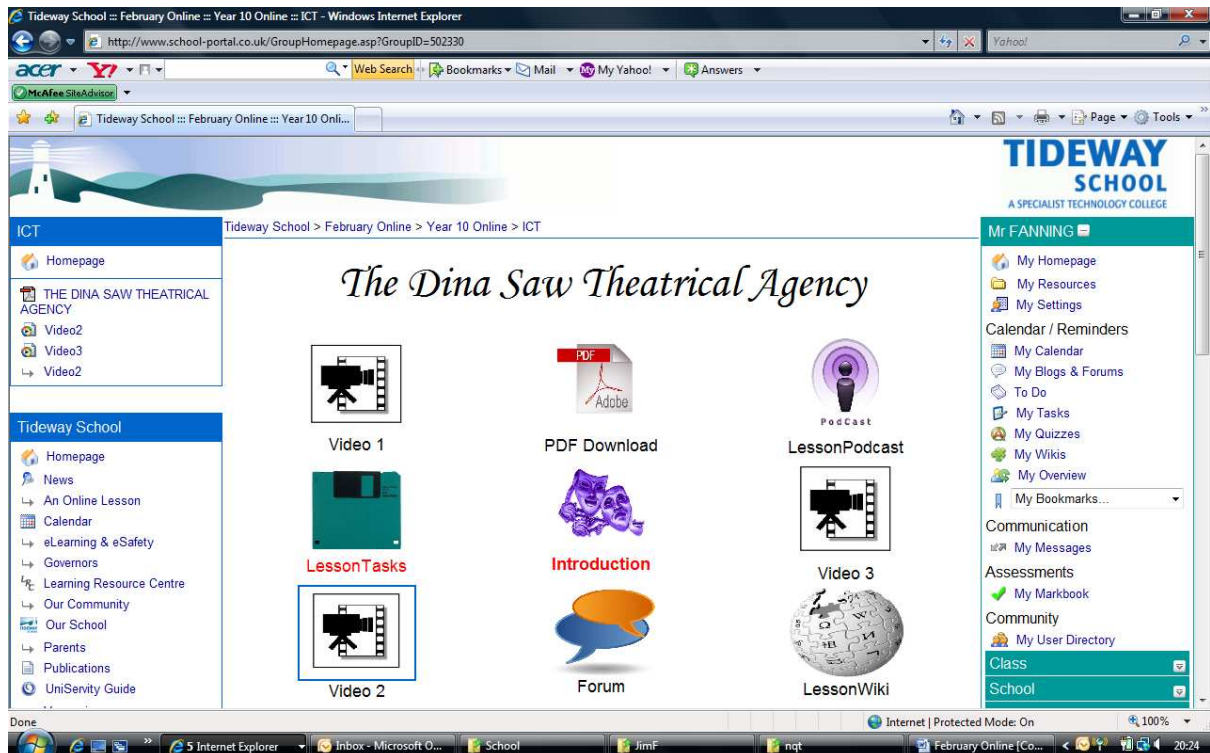
A number of flexible learning pilots have taken place through ICT at KS4. The lessons learned from the February project will allow us to better understand and plan for the more effective use of learning platform applications across the curriculum.

The small scale pilots so far suggest that we can expect to encounter the following issues:

- Learning platform enables anywhere-anytime learning and this has an impact on staff workload (how do we resolve this?).
- Who has the skills to design appropriate online content and learning opportunities (simply uploading resources that are used in the classroom 'does not work')?
- Is online learning more appropriate to some rather than most subject areas (the pilots have taken place within an ICT qualification that is itself very flexible and lends itself to a more flexible approach to learning)?
- Online lessons can generate vast amounts of marking!
- Students expect a quick response in terms of online support (can we really provide effective out-of-hours support?).

The February Project will generate these kinds of questions!

What next?



A Year 10 ICT Lesson

- In the next edition of the LIGHTHOUSE the project will be explained to students and parents/carers.
- A weekly update will be emailed to staff.
- KS4 lesson plans and resources will be sent to JF by the end of November (JF and WH have already been informed about Science, Maths and PE intentions).
- By the end of November KS3 project topics will be identified.
- ICT survey results will be published by the end of November and made available to staff. A plan of action relating to the booking of town based facilities will be drawn up and implemented by the end of December.
- A group of KS4/Year 10 students will be recruited to act as e-Moderators for the project and offer support at KS3. Moderator training will take place in January 2009.

Jim Fanning (20/11/08)