Case Study

Firbank Grammar School

Firbank Grammar School was established in 1909 as a day and boarding school for girls.

Today, Firbank is a three campus, ELC-12 co-educational school, with 1,250 students.

firefly

Firefly is easy to use and is now our central hub for all the school's online learning tools. Implementation was swift, and teachers and students are able to use Firefly on whichever device they choose.

Paul Mears, Director of Digital Learning,
Firbank Grammar School – Melbourne, Australia

650 students logged on and started using Firefly before official launch

Full integration with our existing tools, Office 365 accounts and SIS

Firefly transformed feedback, our use of rubrics and progress tracking across the school

What was your situation before Firefly?

We had been using an LMS for 8 years and have been a 1:1 iPad school from Years 3-12 for 5 years. Unfortunately, this LMS was a small onshore solution that was unable to provide the financial investment required to evolve and develop to meet the needs of digital age learning and teaching.

Over the past three years a number of light weight solutions had mushroomed up in our environment as teachers, to their testament, looked elsewhere for tools to meet their online learning needs. But, this resulted in a disjointed and fragmented system environment and caused frustration for the learner. Adding complexity to the this was the implementation of cloud-based applications including MS Office 365 and Google Apps.

Why did you choose Firefly?

We established a new learning strategy in collaboration with students, for which a key result was to move away from iPads in year 7-12 and implement a full BYOT environment for senior students. Another core need voiced by learners was the ability to access all content in one place, as well as an effective messaging system and a seamless user experience.

We formed a selection committee made up of an equal number of teachers and students cross-age, and it was truly the students input that led the process and reviewed shortlisted providers.

Firefly really appealed to the students due to the user experience, ease of use and ability to create and publish their own work. Both teachers and students placed heavy emphasis on the workflow, for any device and feedback was of paramount importance to our learning strategy. We were aware of the imminent release of the new Firefly markbook and knew the platform would only get better. Teachers were in desperate need of a system that would pull together all the sources of content and provide deep integration.

How did you roll out Firefly to teachers and students?

One of the many advantages Firefly offers is the potential for schools to setup a full functioning trial site. This provided comfort to the decision making team and allowed a term to explore the system. Another key advantage was the service Firefly provide by building the integration with Synergetic our Student Information System. This was simply brilliant as it allowed for a swift implementation without the hidden cost and burden of building the integration in-house.

We made a commitment to Firefly in October with the intention to roll out in the following academic year (Term 1). After this term, we planned to introduce Firefly to the wider student community at the start of the new year, in January. Once the summer holidays hit we checked the statistics on the site only to realise over 650 students had accessed the site and were exploring and creating content. It remains unknown how the students got the live link but it was distributed on social media and with their 365 credentials students were quickly able to get access. Harmless and testimony to the ease of use of Firefly. Needless to say it did make the Day 1 launch somewhat of a formality!

What improvements have you seen since Firefly was implemented?

As was intended from our original strategy we have centralised our resources and Firefly has become an integrated learning platform. It has resolved issues pertaining to a multiple system environment and has actually created a spike in the use of ClickView and other digital repositories. The markbook has been well received particularly in the senior school and has helped us achieve parts of our strategy relating to effective student feedback.

Digital portfolios are starting to get real traction and are promoting greater learner reflection. Communication between student and teacher is seamless. Most importantly the learning experiences are more multimodal, point in time, personalised, engaging and effective.

What are your future plans with Firefly?

For the remainder of the year the focus is on learners developing their Digital Portfolios and teachers crafting their ability to develop online learning experiences that are based on good pedagogy. The ease of use of Firefly means teachers can spend less time in mastering the system and more time in researching and developing effective online delivery methodologies. With the release of Firefly 6 and the new markbook and parent app it is our intention is to embrace these new opportunities and move to a continuous reporting model for our parents next year.

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