

<http://merlin.swgfl.org.uk>

Workflow: Workflows enables users to apply defined processes to items of content and trigger actions. For example, workflows can be used to route information automatically to people who need to approve documents, or to obtain parental permissions for an activity. Workflow also offers version control for documents being worked on by more than one person.

Access Management: Tools enable users to control access rights to pages and features by group and by individual user. For example school policy documents can be read-only, while postings to a Discussion Forum* can be allowed for specific individuals.

Mobile Mode: Access relevant content types from mobile devices such as a phone.

Administration Tools

Content Filtering: Filtering can be switched on for Our Places*, preventing the use of inappropriate content.

Password Delegation: Administrators can grant other staff the ability to reset user passwords, removing dependency on individual staff or the need to share the administrator password.

Password Policies: Administrators can apply one of a number of password policies to user groups, e.g. enabling studentlearners to have simple passwords but requiring staff to choose strong, complex passwords that have to be changed periodically.

Storage Quota Management: Administrators can see how much of their school's space is being used, and can control the amounts available for school-owned items and individual quotas.

Module Management: Many features of the service can be switched on or off for each school. This can be useful when getting started, providing users with a simplified view; more advanced features can be added over time.

Integration with VLEs: SWGfL Merlin will provide integration with a variety of other VLEs. More detailed information will be available later in 2008.

User Directory: Authorised users are provided with access to a searchable user directory containing all registered SWGfL Merlin users.



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Additional Information

Accessibility: SWGfL Merlin is designed to meet recognised accessibility standards and includes additional features and guidance for those with additional needs.

Browser Support: SWGfL Merlin will be accessible using Internet Explorer, Firefox and Safari.

Help Files: Help is always at hand – web based help files and Getting Started Guides are available throughout.

Access to Learning Resources: Users within SWGfL Merlin will be able to access a variety of content without having to provide their username and password again. The service employs a technology called Shibboleth to provide single sign-on.

Creating users: SWGfL Merlin has been designed to assist schools with the speedy set-up of accounts for their teachers, learners and other users. The provisioning system allows accounts to be created by uploading files of user names through an on-line form, or automatically from the school's Management Operability Framework standard, (SIF). This means that if a teacher changes name, or a learner changes year, the updates are reflected automatically in SWGfL Merlin. The provisioning system can also help identify where teachers or learners attend multiple learning establishments and provide them with a single user name and password that allows access to their SWGfL Merlin tools and content.

Security: All data transfer is encrypted and every user has their own unique username and password.

Acceptable Use Policy: All users are required to accept the AUP prior to using the service.

Anti-virus: Files stored within the system are scanned for viruses.

Back up and Recovery: All data stored within the SWGfL Merlin service is regularly backed up.



SWGfL Merlin



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SWGfL Merlin - the foundation for your learning platform

What will it provide?

SWGfL Merlin will provide the foundation for school learning platforms across the South West of England. Designed for educators, local authorities, children, young people and a host of other audiences, it will also support important government agendas and initiatives, including Every Child Matters, Personalised Learning and Access to information.

The SWGfL Merlin service will include simplified sign-on services, an easy to use virtual desktop, regional collaborative tools, and space for all users and learners to store files, accessible anytime, anywhere there is an internet connection..

The service will offer interoperability, integrating management information systems, virtual learning environments and additional tools. Because SWGfL Merlin will adopt national standards for authentication, in time schools will also be able to access through their SWGfL Merlin username web-based content and services they choose to subscribe to and content. Safety and security are paramount, so it will be an e-safe environment too.

This guide provides a summary of the main features within the SWGfL Merlin service (more detailed information, included technical specifications and training materials will be available later this year).

Getting Started

The first thing users see when they log on is the SWGfL Merlin desktop. Different desktops are available for different groups of users.

My First Place



My First Place introduces the concepts of a personal space, ownership of learning and personalised experience delivered through a colourful child-friendly interface.

The tools and experience of users can be set up by the school on a year group or individual level. This means that a reception class can have a simpler interface and experience compared to a KS1 class. As pupils grow and learn, functionality and tools can be added in a controlled fashion to directly meet individual needs.

Children can access their own diary, on-line file storage areas, drawing tool and simple word processor. Their creations can be combined into on-line e-books to be shared with classmates. E-safety is also addressed in My First Place - sharing of children's materials is controlled and managed by teachers.



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* Refers to another SWGfL Merlin feature described in this guide.



My Files[^]: All staff and pupils are provided with a web based file store that includes drag and drop support, a recycle bin and filters to find information quickly.

Personal Calendar[^]: All staff and pupils have access to their own personal online calendar.

Widgets: Everyone has access to a selection of tools to add to their desktop including news, RSS news feeds, Bookmarks, Clock and Calculator.

Web parts: The library of standard SharePoint web parts is available for advanced users to further personalise a desktop with direct access to, for example, applications such as an Excel spreadsheet

Contacts[^]: All staff and pupils have their own private address book for storing contacts.

E-portfolio[^]: All staff and pupils have an area to publish and share information with other users. E-portfolios can include work learners are proud of and wish to share with peers or parents, and can include picture and document libraries as well as their own blog* to support their learning.



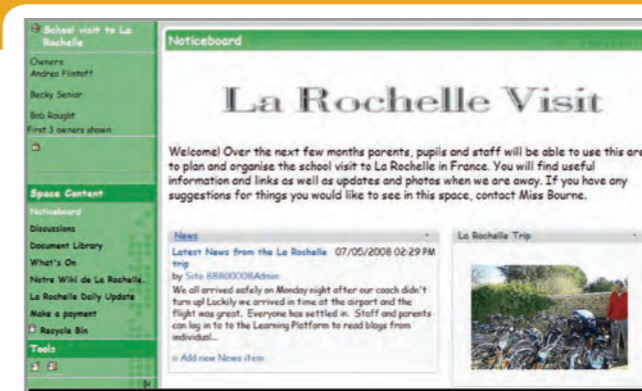
My Profile: Each user has their own profile; here they can provide information about themselves which can then be viewed by other users. They can also provide an email address to receive alerts*.

Themes: A library of themes offer a choice of user interface colour and style; high contrast themes are also available. The industry standard design means users are also able to change things like font size using browser controls.

► Our Places

Our Places are collaboration spaces, designed for use by groups of users to share information and communicate, for example using discussion forums. Members might include all the children in a class, a group of parents, or perhaps staff from a number of schools. Our Places can include a wide variety of tools and features (described below).

Targeted News: Authorised users can publish news; they can also 'push' news items, so users see the item on their desktop when they next logon.



Discussion Forums: Discussion forums enable online communication; moderation and content filtering are also available.

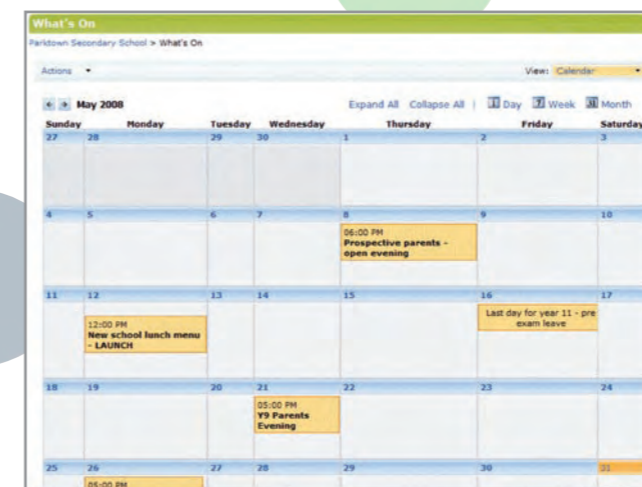
Blogs: Blogs are a popular way for groups or individuals to publish news, ideas, experiences, and invite comment.

Document Libraries: Document libraries are used to store information such as files and pictures. They can be for an individual, or for groups. Schools might choose to publish all their policies or photos from school trips in a Document Library.

Moderation and Approval: SWGfL Merlin enables moderation and approval to be used with a variety of tools. For example posts to blogs* and discussion forums*, as well as web page content can be checked by a member of staff prior to being published.

Wikis: Wikis are an easy way to for users to jointly work on a document, creating a body of knowledge they can easily share and update.

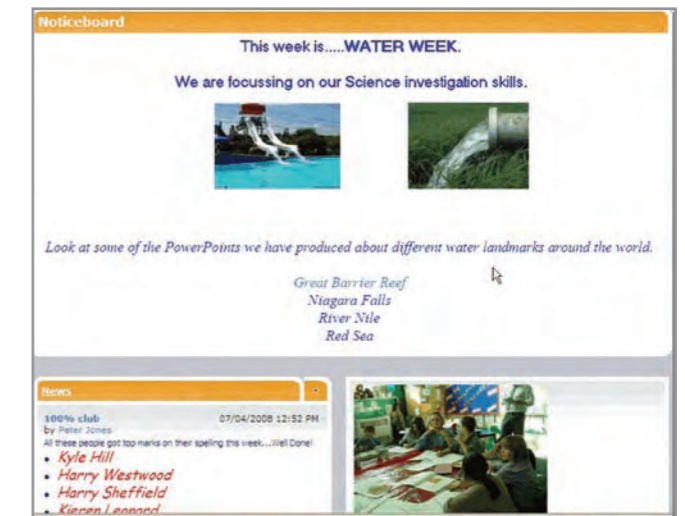
Integrated Calendars: Our Places* can include calendars, for sharing events with members. Multiple calendars can be viewed simultaneously; they are overlaid on the personal calendar to provide a complete picture of events.



RSS: Using the RSS reader, users are able to view news feeds. Content within the SWGfL Merlin service can also be broadcast as an RSS feed, for example a user may use the RSS Reader to subscribe to another user's blog* which has been made available as an RSS feed.

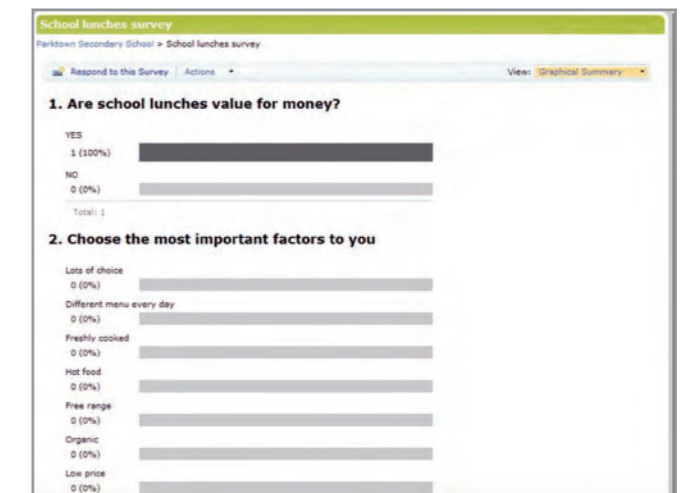
Content: Users are able to create and publish content using tools such as the rich text editor – pages can include video, Flash, images and audio; a spell checker is also provided.

Recycle Bins: Recycle bins enable recovery of deleted documents from personal and shared Document Libraries*.



Alerts: Users are able to register for email alerts. For example a teacher might choose to be alerted when a policy document changes.

Surveys: Surveys are created quickly and easily, and can be used in a variety of ways. For example they can be used in lessons, or as a way to gather feedback or information from users. Responses can be anonymous, useful if conducting a vote, and results are displayed instantly as graphs.



Sticky-Notes: Users are able to attach sticky notes (like an electronic Post-it note) to their own screens anywhere in SWGfL Merlin – an easy way to leave reminders or comments for future reference.

Public Access: Authorised staff can choose to make selected Our Places* available via the public Internet.

Search: Users are able to search for content and users. When searching for content, searches can be applied to the metadata (i.e. information about the content, such as the owner) or the body of the content.

► Moving On

Older learners, staff, parents and other users are provided with a more advanced interface and set of tools. The design is engaging, graphical, and easy to navigate, and comprises two main areas – My Place and Our Places.

► My Place

My Place provides each user with a 'virtual desktop' and quick and easy access to a range of useful tools. Once allocated, this personal area will stay with them when they move schools within the SWGfL region.



My Desktop[^]: The desktop is provided for every user and enables them to add an image as a background (wallpaper) and select and display a variety of information using widgets*.

File Storage[^]: A simple bar graph indicates the space available to each user and the amount remaining.

Last Logon: Last-logout date and time is displayed to users, helping them detect if someone else has used their account.

* Refers to another SWGfL Merlin feature described in this guide. ^ The features available will vary according to user type.

* Refers to another SWGfL Merlin feature described in this guide.