

Merlin's Book of Spells



Sharing wonderful IDEAS, which start in YOUR classroom, however small they are.

Merlin provides the foundation for school learning platforms throughout the South West of England, and is centrally funded by 14 member Local Authorities. Discover what's making magic happen in classrooms around the region, find five fantastic resource spaces, take a peek at seven super school sites and find out more about Merlin 2013.

Spell: Using Google Streetview to go on a 'Virtual Fieldtrip'

Ingredients: As part of our topic on the Jurassic Coast in the Summer Term we go on lots of beautiful visits to Charmouth, Swanage, Kimmeridge, etc. However, when considering the human Geography alongside the natural Geography we hadn't planned a trip to a seaside town.

One afternoon, I was proud to enter my classroom and declare that without a risk assessment, a coach or any permission slips I was prepared to take my class on a field trip. I explained to the class that we were going to visit Weymouth and that once we were there they would be allowed to explore the town... alone. The only requirement that I set was that they all would write me a diary entry about their visit. Obviously this was greeted with much excitement in my Year 2 class.

Embedding a Google Streetview map within a simple blank Merlin page created our 'Virtual Fieldtrip'. The children then used MFP - opened in a separate window to write me a diary entry about their visit.



Magic Moment: In all honestly the magic moment was the children not being disappointed that they were not really going on a field trip. In fact, I was surprised how engaged they were in exploring the interactive map. Yes, at times the children moved into other geographical areas including France and Belgium but that was all part of their learning experience. The work produced as a result of their virtual fieldtrip was some of their best work all year and made a wonderful display.

Gary Spracklen, Prince of Wales First School, Dorset

Spell: Assessment: Using the discussion board, video and voice recorder tools to illicit children's prior knowledge and for them to share what they have learnt (can be used for all subjects)

Ingredients: At the beginning of our topic on the Tudors, in order to illicit the children's prior knowledge, they were asked: What do you already know about the Tudors? This question was added to the Merlin discussion board. Children contributed to the discussion in school time. At the end of the topic, children were asked: What have you learnt and enjoyed? The responses were fascinating and surprising....

Magic Moment: The children used a range of Merlin tools to record their answers (many which they learnt themselves!) Some used the video tool to record a 'news report' of their learning, whilst others used the voice recorder. Fantastic for those children who find writing challenging!

The children even went home and added to the discussion in their own time – giving suggestions on interesting websites for other children to visit and adding pictures etc. Most of the skills were self-taught and they even showed me a thing or two!

It was a fantastic assessment tool for me, and will hopefully be a useful aid when writing the children's reports this year!



Leah Shepperd, St Julian's C of E Primary School, Bath & North East Somerset

Spell: Using a wiki to engage Y5 pupils in their homework

Ingredients: Y5 children research a country each week for homework. Using a wiki they share what they have found out on Merlin. Anyone can view it on the public side of our Merlin site www.gotoourschool.com/stellam

Magic moment: Our site was down for about a week and the pupils complained every day!

Eileen Marner, St Mary's School, Bath & North East Somerset



Spell: Initiating a blog in your class

Ingredients: Get hold of a soft toy which the class can take in turns to take home for the weekend. The class member then will take on role the character of the class toy to "blog" about their stay with -?- from the class and include photos of what they might have done. This is very much based around the Barnaby Bear idea that Infant schools use to develop Geography skills and knowledge.

Magic Moment: The children learn what "blogging" is all about and enjoy the special privilege taking home the class toy. Writing skills are developed and awareness of audience, etc.

Jo Savory, Changdag Junior School,

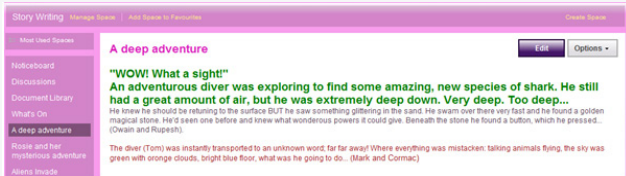
Merlin 2013

SWGfL is currently working with its partners to be able to continue to offer Merlin as a new optional service to schools from September 2013. We need your feedback on the future options to help us with this preparation. Please visit www.swgflmerlin.org.uk/merlin2013 to find out about the new service and tell us what you think.

Spell: International Collaboration

Ingredients: Children created pages to share aspects of their lives. The Cornwall pages were especially popular with the Afghan students as Afghanistan is a land locked country and the majority have never seen the sea. The Afghan teachers and students have uploaded images to the slideshow, and as such this gives a real insight into their daily lives and the similarities and differences in their lives.

We set up collaborative story writing opportunities where we began a story and other schools from the Cornwall Cluster and students from schools in Afghanistan then continued the stories.



Owain and Rupesh are Afghan students from Koor High School in Kabul.

Magic Moment: We found that stories were an important shared medium for communication, as children from both cultures were able to relate to familiar stories and experiences.

Susan Buscombe, Teacher, St Mary's Primary School, Falmouth, Cornwall



Creating Merlin's Book of Spells is a wonderful way to support teachers across the South West of England as they continue their journey with online learning.

To contribute your own magic moments please contact merlin@swgfl.org.uk

Five Spaces Worth a Visit:

Shared Spaces, Show all Spaces, Choose establishment SWGfL (1)

Merlin Kit

Get everything you need to jazz up your space.

Stuff for Learning

Links to free content from the National Education Network and tasters from our top rated providers.

Using SWGfL Merlin

Find help, advice, training materials and links to best practise.

Ideas for Using SWGfL Merlin

Wonderful ideas to enhance the curriculum

SIF Request

Get Merlin and your MIS talking!

Spell: Raising attainment in writing

Ingredients: Using Merlin to enhance pupil engagement with homework has been a revelation. Students have gone home and taken an aspect from school that we haven't necessarily covered in the class and independently come back in the next day buzzing about what they have discovered or produced, ready to share that with the rest of the class.

Building on this enthusiasm and interest I began to explore ways in which I could engage pupils who were not motivated to write in other ways. I was able to provide writing opportunities that enabled pupils to draft, share, review and refine their work online. Merlin has enabled me to make available appropriate banks of sounds, photographs and videos to stimulate writing, checklists and writing frames to support writing and interactive discussions and wikis provide pupils with the opportunity to review one another's work.

Magic moment: Significant progress made by a specific group of reluctant writers.

Oly White, Teacher, Kentisbore Primary School Devon

Spell: Head teachers blog

Ingredients: My last school had a "log book" that had been kept in a drawer since the 1920's. Headteachers had written a line a week for over 90 years, I filled it in every Friday and it was a wonderful way of keeping a living history of the school going.

An on line Headteacher's Blog, seems to me to be a modern equivalent with the added advantage that it can be shared with children and parents as well as with posterity. I started off last Christmas writing a very factual list of "what's happened this week," but I've noticed that it has rapidly developed into a more personal diary - albeit with the practical result of reporting to parents and highlighting coming events. I get a lot of good feedback and it has generated some really positive questions and suggestions.

Magic Moment: It's nice to receive positive feedback and hear about problems early.

Tom Hill, HeadTeacher, Newtown Community Primary School, Wiltshire

Seven School Sites to Take a Peek at:

www.allsaints-netheravon.wilts.sch.uk

www.catherinewayte.swindon.sch.uk

www.st-marys.bathnes.sch.uk

www.collaton-st-mary-primary.torbay.sch.uk

www.christtheking.bristol.sch.uk

www.stives.dorset.sch.uk

www.hamworthymiddleschool.co.uk/merlin

