

## **Merlin and SIMS Summary DRAFT June 2011**

Before a school goes live with Parental Engagement, there are several checks which need to take place to ensure that the process is smooth. This document takes you through the main considerations on SIMS data.

### **Checking Parental Contact data before Provisioning accounts**

- **Duplicate contacts**

When you enrol the sibling of an existing on-roll student, new contacts with the same details are sometimes incorrectly added to the SIMS database instead of the new student being linked to the existing contacts. If this is not detected, both versions of that contact receive different logins when usernames and passwords are issued, each with access to just one of the siblings

Run the delete unlinked contacts routine. Run the Duplicate Contacts Check report and use it to help identify where such contacts exist. If such contacts are found, rename one to identify it as being the one you wish to delete. Attach the student to the correct version of the contact; remove the link to the incorrect duplicate contact. Run the delete unlinked contacts routine again.

- **Incorrect parental responsibility flag**

Check that Parental Responsibility flags are correctly assigned to contacts in SIMS to ensure that appropriate contacts get access to their children's data. At some schools there may be contacts shown as having parental responsibility for students who are not their own children. This may be correct but it is worth checking. If logins are issued, contacts who have parental responsibility for a student has access to details of that student.

### **Checking Parental Username format in Merlin**

- Check format and password complexity is in line with school policy

### **User Provisioning and Issuing Accounts**

- **Distributing Accounts**

The process of issuing and maintaining parental login details should be carefully managed. Even if the data has been checked as above, it is recommended that the following process (or similar) is followed:

Choose a year group at a time.

Send a general letter asking if parents want online access to their children's data.

Some schools first issue logins, then ask parents to apply for their password, thereby introducing an opportunity for further data checks and vetting applicants.

Send an Acceptable Use Policy to interested parents along with documents they must sign to confirm their acceptance, the accuracy of their details and details of the children for whom they have parental responsibility.

Request valid parental email addresses and enter this data into SIMS before provisioning.

Check and if necessary, amend all gathered parental data. Provision the parents and issue the logins and passwords, using adapted versions of the reports provided within SIMS.

Distribute usernames and passwords separately.

NOTE: Some schools have decided to send the logins and passwords separately by post, some have asked parents to collect them and some have given them out at parents' evening, where parents can immediately access the site and be given a demonstration. In all cases, given the potential for difficulty, especially with first-time logins, it is important to provide clear instructions and help to try to avoid problems. If a parent loses or forgets their password, the school can reset it, but must have a clear procedure as to how this happens and how the new password is delivered to the

- **Access to Data**

Develop an internal administration policy that outlines key procedures and practices. This should include identifying what data to share and what is to be kept private, and school processes to ensure that information is kept up to date and accurate. This must ensure that your school implementation adheres to the Data Protection Act, protects young children and that it follows current guidelines and UK legislation. For example: Ensure that you have acceptance or agreement with students, where necessary, to share data with their parents(s) or carer(s) in line with the Data Protection Act. Ensure that the school staff involved are aware of their responsibilities.

### **Data Specific Issues**

- **Attendance data**

Attendance data is uploaded twice daily from SIMS.net and will only display the next day. It is a snapshot of the last three months rather than a complete attendance record for the year.

- **Achievement and Behaviour**

Merlin shows both SIMS Achievement and Behaviour under the heading of Behaviour.

Merlin allows you to configure which components of the Behaviour/Achievement logs are visible to parents

Decide whether to share behaviour and achievement information online with parents. You can change your mind or phase this in later. Consider using Merlin Configuration pages to remove the ability for parents to see entries until staff have been trained to enter incidents.

- **Assessment**

Merlin will pick up the Key Stage Validated Results in English and Mathematics. These will be displayed in Merlin as a Results tab.

- **Student Personal Details**

It is imperative that schools ensure the safety of children in their care at all times. It is necessary to ensure that data, particularly sensitive data, is safeguarded from those that should not be receiving it. Students' personal details held within SIMS are available to parents via Merlin unless the school decides to hide specific web parts. Ones which have proved to be contentious include: Student address, Student phone number and Student medical details. It depends on what data the school decides to store in, for example, the medical information fields as to whether it is appropriate to display it to parents.

- **SEN Data**

The SEN data that will be available to share will be: SEN Status, SEN Need, SEN Reviews and SEN Events. Schools may want to consider if all this data is currently entered into Sims .net and maintained and if they will want to share it with parents.