

Achievement

The SIMS in education newsletter

PRIMARY
EDITION

Four Primary Schools in very different environments
and circumstances make excellent use of SIMS...



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WINTER 2006/SPRING 2007

At Harrington Hill Primary in Hackney, staff use SIMS .net to track which pupils are engaged with their learning. Intervention happens immediately an indicator of disengagement shows up in SIMS Behaviour, Attendance or Assessment Manager

This small school is a model of what a good inner-city primary should be, to the benefit of pupils and the wider community. There are many 'after school' clubs for pupils, and a family learning centre where parents attend English, computing and parenting classes. Children visit opera, art galleries, museums; the standard of art and music is extremely high, and the school has an 'ArtsMark' Gold award. A social worker is employed by a small consortium of this and other local schools to work with families and support home/school partnerships.



Headteacher Kae McSweeney explains:

"Our environment remains very challenging, and the social mobility of families in the area has a big effect on pupil performance – especially in a small school such as ours. We put a lot of resources into our nursery and reception provision, and consequently the pupils make great progress prior to Key Stage 1. As a result our 'value added' between Key Stage 1 and 2 does not look so spectacular. We must therefore track individual progress and all its indicators in great detail. This is only possible with SIMS .net.

The school has always believed in providing a broad and balanced curriculum; however in light of the 'Excellence and Enjoyment'* documents we decided to put a lot more emphasis on the arts and develop a greater variety of teaching strategies to improve all children's learning. This has meant looking at how children learn, and creating more opportunities where children are involved with their own learning – learning to assess their own work, know their preferred learning style, and participate in the planning. We want children to be leaders and to be active partners in the school. We are looking at deeper learning so children need opportunities to apply their knowledge.

*Excellence and Enjoyment document can be found at www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primaryframeworks



Harrington Hill pupils



Harrington Hill mathematician

Standards Manager, Seth Weir uses SIMS Assessment Manager to record and analyse individual and group achievements. He is able to identify not only the strengths and weaknesses of the school but the development areas for each class so children are identified and given the extra support they need.

Seth explains: "Annual targets in the core subjects are recorded on the system, and are broken down into term results so when the tests are done and the results entered each term, teachers can see how effective their teaching has been and whether the extra support provided to identified children is working." At Harrington Hill the achievement of different ethnic groups is continuously monitored. All ethnicity codes are in SIMS, so that the attainment of specific groups or individuals can be analysed and special provision can be specifically targeted.

Seth continues: "The Excellence in Cities register is available to all staff, and our Inclusion Manager, Begonia Escudero identifies activities we cannot provide in school, directing them to the pupils who would most benefit, e. g. 'gifted & talented' workshops in school holidays for potential scientists. We will identify these pupils as a User Defined Group in SIMS, and so monitor their progress."

SIMS shows clearly the link between behaviour, attendance and achievement

Attendance administrator, Jennifer Charles uses SIMS Attendance to spot individual and patterns of absence – she makes a 'first day' call to parents, and termly attendance reports from the software are presented to all parents. Jennifer also manages the weekly production of attendance certificates – again from SIMS, for the best attending classes, and for the least 'lates'.

The approach we are using is new and we needed some way of assessing on a day to day level children's involvement and engagement in the new curriculum. We use the behaviour record system in SIMS .net as an indicator of engagement. This is used in every class where we record when children are off task. We have tracked children over a long period of time so we are able to compare individuals and whole classes. This is made possible by the behaviour management part of SIMS. We can also link this information with other areas of SIMS – special needs, attendance and achievement. This data is used to ensure all children get the support they need to be true learners."

Kae has re-structured her leadership team to reflect the changing curriculum. SLT responsibilities are shared between Kae, her Deputy, Susan Williams and three other colleagues. These comprise the standards manager, inclusion manager and partnerships manager. All staff, including NQTs, have some curricular or year group responsibility, and the structure works via phase teams and flexible multi phase teams assembled as issues arise. Each team is represented on the SLT so ideas are able to flow through the structure.



Seth: "We can demonstrate the link between behaviour, attendance and achievement: "We have found there is a clear link between poor behaviour and poor attendance leading to poor achievement. We can then involve the

Home/School liaison officer, the shared social worker and the school mentor. If concerns continue we have a significant amount of information in SIMS to share when we involve outside agencies."

Seth uses Assessment Manager for these key analyses:

- teacher assessments in core subjects.
- baseline to Key Stage 1 analysis using P-levels
- analysis of groups in relation to year group
- the attainment of the variety of ethnic groups, and gender differences

Achievement 04



Inclusion Manager, Begonia Escudero uses the SEN area of SIMS .net:

- To update and monitor the SEN Register
- To record statement levels
- To record attendance at SEN meetings, specific comments and 'Provision' decisions

IEP Writer 3 linked to SIMS .net is used to record the individual education plan including specific targets, for each pupil on the register.

IEP Writer 3 enables teachers and SENCOs to quickly create and store professional, personalised Individual Education Plans (IEP) electronically in one place, and help them to set realistic targets for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs (SEN).

Visit www.sims.co.uk/iep to find out more

You can use your eLearning Credits to purchase IEP Writer 3



Kae: "At Harrington Hill we are able to use the evidence in the SIMS system as the foundation for 'Every Child Matters'. We are a SIMS Partnership School. I love being a in this group as it keeps me up-to-date – and if I have a concern it is dealt with quickly, and I am able to give feedback. It is a scheme which supports me and what we are doing at Harrington Hill."

SIMS at Harrington Hill is supported by Capita's London & Southern Regional Centre.



Find out more about the SIMS Partnership Schools programme on page 11-12.

All Saints Church of England Junior School uses SIMS data to track and analyse pupils' performance – and then uses this data to drive the school improvement plan:

Headteacher, Janet Roberts' strategy to do this successfully is a great example of 'distributed leadership'...

All Saints in Fleet, Hampshire is 'an outstanding school that provides outstanding value for money. Pupils' achievement is very good because of outstanding teaching. Standards are very high, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Virtually all pupils meet the expected standards by the end of Year 6, and a large majority exceed them' *

Ofsted 2005

Headteacher, Janet Roberts sets the context:

"This is a large junior school where most pupils come from the local area and their social circumstances are in the main above average. About 90% of pupils are of white British origin, and almost all pupils speak English at home – and all are fluent speakers of English. Pupils' attainment on entry covers a wide range, but is significantly above average overall. In these favourable circumstances, where virtually all pupils meet the expected standards by the end of Year 6 with a large majority exceeding them, it is key that we track progress and ensure that we are not 'coasting'; Value Added is very important here."

The school's use of SIMS .net is integral to both the smooth-running of both learning-related and administrative processes. Good use is made of all areas of the Pupil Performance suite – Assessment Manager, Performance Analysis and Profiles. IEP Writer produces personalised learning plans where appropriate. Attendance data is entered by OMR, and SIMS Dinner Money is extremely popular: "It's revolutionised the speed and accuracy with which we deal with this task" explained School Secretary, Jan Harrod.

In this case study we look in particular at the use of pupil performance data by a variety of colleagues, to inform their planning. This illustrates Janet's belief that once strategic goals are set, teachers and non-teaching staff work together to utilise, understand and act on the information available from SIMS and from their knowledge and understanding of individuals and groups. The resulting culture at All Saints means that colleagues of varying ages and experiences feel able to take the initiative in using the information to plan next steps. Librarian, Pat Foulger is a great example – she has developed Assessment Manager knowledge since version 4 days. As she says, "I am virtually self taught, but by now I can produce marksheets and templates with the latest version pretty much to order." This means that other colleagues can quickly get down to looking at the data. Janet has organised the staffing structure to reflect the key tasks of maintaining and improving learning outcomes in this successful school. Year Heads have responsibility for co-ordinating the 'improving standards' agenda, overseen by Improving Standards Manager, Nick Parker.



Left to right – Sam Clifton, Janet Roberts, Tom Carter, Pat Foulger and Laura Roke

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Pond dipping at All Saints

The factors involved are of course complex; we have chosen to illustrate the school's success in using data by focussing on just three areas – the culture of the school, the role of the improving standards meetings, and action research activities.

The culture and ethos at All Saints

On our visit we noted:

- There is a 'no blame' culture – so teachers are not afraid to take the initiative
- Senior managers oversee 'opportunity groups' – where extra support or extension work is identified by the data as needed
- Data is shared with parents and pupils – it's a joint effort
- Data 'de-personalises, de-mystifies and celebrates success' ... Janet
- Analysis is on-going, not year end: regular snapshots not post-event justification
- If a parent is alerted by performance data, some 'actions' are already under consideration – Janet will meet 'anxious' parents, with a plan to discuss with them
- There is a strong 'team model' in place for analysing, professional discussion and planning

'Improving Standards' Meetings

We were privileged to observe a Year 4 I.S.meeting, and saw (in 40 minutes):

- The year 4 leader (ex Graduate Programme trainee Laura Roke), two NQTs, plus a teacher new to Year 4, analysing tracking sheets from Assessment Manager as a team
- The team identifying a support maths 'opportunity group' – by considering a very wide range of performance indicators, and discussing each pupil individually
- Then discussing learning objectives for the group, resources and assessment opportunities
- Identifying a 'top' group from personal knowledge, and cross-checking against the data
- Then discussing the detail of the extension work available
- Noting 'with shock', how few girls appeared in the 'top' group, and committing to return to this issue – using trend analysis from Performance Analysis, then action research will be considered
- In the meantime, extension work would be available to whole classes

Action Research

Some examples we saw included:

- Year 1 data used by year teams to identify possible dyslexic pupils – using reading, writing and spelling results

Specific teaching programmes are put in place for such pupils, results tracked focussing on individual value-added.

The effectiveness of such programmes and resources is then evaluated, using Performance Analysis.

- A 'boy heavy' Year group had poor results predicted by the data

Appropriate pedagogy was planned by colleagues (including Librarian Pat Foulger who can, for example, track the reading preferences of boys as individuals and as a group) and evaluated by tracking and analysing results.

Extra teaching resources allocated were also evaluated by tracking and analysing results.

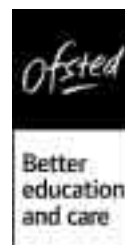
All Saints chose training on SIMS Pupil Performance Suite from Capita Central...

Consultant John Christian commented:

"All Saints Primary is an excellent overall SIMS user. but felt they needed guidance as to the best way to extract data to inform their teachers, with the aim of improving pupil performance."

The Professional Services team will be pleased to help with your training needs, either in school or by attending one of our scheduled training courses. For further information visit www.sims.co.uk/training or telephone **0844 983 9000**.

STOP PRESS:



All Saints has been named as 'outstanding' by Ofsted in its list of such schools for 2005/6.

Congratulations to all at the school from Capita Education Services.



Headteacher, Dave Green and Administrator, Kylie Raybould

Old Hill Headteacher, Dave Green and his staff have worked for many years to improve parental attitudes to attendance, and with the help of SIMS and its partner product Truancy Call®, positive changes are becoming evident.



Truancy Call is a 'first day calling' system that is fully integrated with SIMS.

Information from class registers is transferred to the Truancy Call software, which compiles a list of pupils who have an unexplained absence. At the touch of a button, contact is made with the parents or carers of these pupils – by phone, text or email, and asks for a response. The Truancy Call system will continue to try to contact the parent throughout the day and into the evening, until a response is received. This response is automatically recorded, and can be viewed by school staff throughout the day. Staff then translate the response to either an authorised or unauthorised absence, and these are automatically relayed into SIMS. The system is fast and easy to use.

Old Hill Primary was one of the first of 20 schools in Sandwell now using Truancy Call with SIMS Attendance to improve absence rates and change attitudes to the importance of regular attendance at school.

Find out more about Truancy Call at www.truancycall.com

Old Hill Primary School in Sandwell is an effective and well-led school, where the staff provide: "A very good climate for learning, particularly for pupils' personal development, to which the pupils respond very well." *Ofsted 2004*

The school is in an area of considerable social deprivation, with pupils' performance on entry well below average, whilst free school meal provision is well above average.

Administrators Kylie Raybould and Nicola Billingham manage the school's SIMS system very well – Kylie looks after FMS and Dinner Money – and with the Head she monitors the payroll and budget. Nicola manages the pupil data, ensuring that it is always up-to-date – crucial in an area of high pupil turnover. The SEN area of SIMS .net is also well used, and pupil performance data is entered in Assessment Manager for on-going monitoring and target setting.

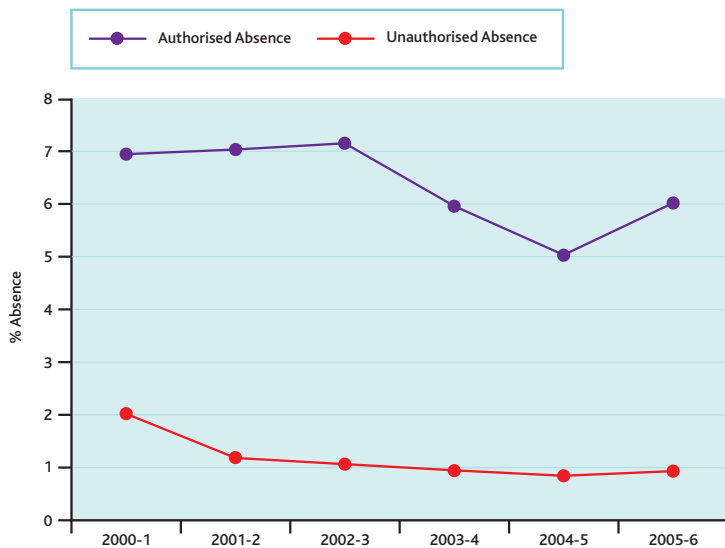
Like other urban Local Authorities, Sandwell has been working to improve school attendance, and in particular reduce truancy and parentally condoned unauthorised absence. Old Hill has used SIMS Attendance for many years, and Kylie is able to produce statistical returns and weekly attendance reports easily: "We dealt with attendance admin well, but the problem was finding the time to contact parents quickly to investigate an absence." Headteacher, Dave Green became aware of Truancy Call via a headteacher colleague, and arranged for its installation in the school. Sandwell's Schools Management Information Systems (SMIS) Strategic Manager, Paul Butler has a close working relationship with Capita Education Services, and became aware of the benefits of the partnership between the two products, actively supporting Old Hill in its implementation.

Kylie: "We've been using the system for about three years and we have seen a real improvement in attendance figures."

Truancy Call is set up to contact parents and carers at 9.30am on the first day of absence. "The parent therefore knows that we know that their child is not in school, and they are encouraged to keep us informed about their child's absence."

Kylie highlights other benefits of the system: "We can identify absence patterns of individual children, and of families. This is discussed with the parents, and over time this is leading to better communication with home. It has also saved us a great deal of time – and made the task of managing attendance more interesting – we cannot imagine life without it!"

Attendance Figures at Old Hill Primary



Parental attitudes to school attendance are changing

Headteacher, Dave Green and Kylie Raybould explain the figures:

"There has been a steady fall in the amount of absence – despite the blip last year which was due to a large amount of genuine illness. We are especially pleased with the fall in unauthorised absence. We think it works in a number of ways:

- First day calling – it keeps trying until contact is made – sending out a strong message from the school about the value of regular attendance
- The immediacy of the contact seems to lead to parents being less likely to condone unnecessary absence and truancy
- It demonstrates how highly we value the safety of our pupils
- Being able to present parents with a record of their own explanation of their child's absence has encouraged them to change their attitude towards school attendance
- It encourages greater communication with parents, yet saves time in the way this is done

How have parents reacted?

Dave Green: "The graph shows the improvement in attendance rates, supporting the fact that parents' reaction has been positive. We believe however that the changes go deeper – I think we're beginning to get the message across that consistent attendance is important. When we first started using the system, 10 to 15 messages a day were sent out via Truancy Call. Today typically, only one was sent. Also, we now start receiving most of the calls to explain an absence from 7.45a.m. The number of families that 'cause concern' is down to ten – the EWO is able to concentrate on this 'hard core'."

What about support?

Kylie: "The Truancy Call helpline is very good – but we haven't had to make much use of it as it rarely goes wrong. And we get excellent support for SIMS from Paul's SMIS team."

SMIS Advisory Officer, Julie Duffell has complemented the use of Truancy Call by training Old Hill staff to get the best out of SIMS Attendance. She commented on the latest version of Attendance: "Our schools love the new link to Attendance from SIMS .net, and especially the 'pie chart' that shows each pupil's attendance visually. At Old Hill they print this to give to parents, and include it in each child's report." Julie has also recently trained the admin staff at Old Hill – and others – on the Reporting tools in SIMS .net. "Kylie and Nicola will soon be producing reports showing the link between attendance and achievement – this will be another piece of evidence for them to address the issues with parents."



Schools Management Information Systems (SMIS)

SMIS provides SIMS support for Sandwell's schools, and for SIMS schools with 'single site' status as far away as Sunderland.

Find out more at www.smis.org.uk

SMIS is a holder of the Capita Accreditation Certificate – awarded to support teams that demonstrate a high level of good quality, good value SIMS support and training.

Find out more at www.sims.co.uk/accreditationscheme



We initially visited Biggin Hill Junior School in Bromley, when they hosted a visit, at very short notice of Mexican Educators to demonstrate the school's use of SIMS.

Capita staff were asked to take the visitors to a Primary school using SIMS, within 30 miles of London, at 24 hours notice! Val McCoy from Capita's London & Southern Regional Centre contacted Biggin Hill's Head Teacher, Martin Pullen, who agreed to host the visit the following day.



Martin: "Despite not knowing what the visitors wanted to see, we were fairly confident that we could show them how important SIMS is for the school. It has been our policy to distribute the use of the software around a number of staff, so that when the group arrived – later and twice as many as expected by either Capita Education Services or ourselves – we were able to put together a presentation that seemed to be of great interest to them. In fact, the event went on far longer than expected, as the group had many questions all of which had to be translated – as did the answers! Luckily when we showed the relevant parts of SIMS, it spoke for itself."

■ Left to right – Claire Ashton, Capita Education Services' Partnership Schools Manager, Linda Brown, Brigitte Bruce and Martin Pullen

Here are the areas of SIMS at Biggin Hill that impressed the Mexican Educators:

SIMS .net pupil data is always up-to-date, and available on a network of computers.

The technical 'infrastructure' is maintained by System Manager and ICT Technician, Linda Brown. Linda joined the school as a teaching assistant, but now uses her skills in this important role: "My next task is to extend SIMS to all teachers' wireless laptops." Administrators, Claire Jones and Penny Snowball keep the basic pupil data updated, while Linda inputs the pupil photographs. Claire also looks after SIMS Financial Management System (FMS) so that Martin can monitor the budget and keep on top of financial planning.

Pupil Attendance administration is in Penny's capable hands: "We do not have major attendance issues at Biggin Hill – nevertheless the admin has to be up-to-date, and SIMS enables me to keep on top of all the figures and the statistical returns. I follow up any unexplained absences by telephoning parents on the second day. I am asked for reports for colleagues and can pull them off the system quickly – for example our SENCO might need a report on a pupil, or if we have a leaver I can pull out attendance – and all other relevant data, and send it on."

A Mexican visitor commented that perhaps the reason the school did not have attendance 'issues' was precisely because of Penny's use of SIMS Attendance.

Pupil Reports are produced with SIMS Profiles. Martin oversees this process himself: "It is very straightforward, and allows me to concentrate on what we are saying about each pupil; the end product looks very professional as well."



Administrator, Penny Snowball

SIMS Dinner Money is also managed by Penny:

"We've used Dinner Money for nearly four years – I would NOT wish to go back to the old ways. Lunch patterns seem quite complicated here – one pupil might have packed lunch, school lunch or go home – all within one week. The software deals with all this and maintains the balances accurately. It allows me to remain in control."

Interested in finding out more about SIMS Dinner Money?

Visit www.sims.co.uk/primary or call 01234 832100

The visitors were especially interested in Biggin Hill's use of pupil performance data:

Assessment Co-ordinator, Brigitte Bruce showed how data stored in SIMS Assessment Manager is used to measure value-added progress year-on-year, for core subjects. Analysis is made by class and year group, and using the 'user defined groups' facility, by factors such as gender, SEN and ethnicity. From the analysis of past performance, the software sets editable targets for two further years. Much interest was shown in the software's highlighting of gender differences in maths, reading and writing, and Martin explained the steps that had been taken to address these issues.

In this discussion the translator did an excellent job dealing with such issues as teacher expectation, professional development and performance management.

Brigitte's Top Tips for getting the best from SIMS Assessment Manager

- Start with a detailed assessment policy – you need this to decide the data to be collated and entered
- Think about a wide range of data – standardised tests as well as SATs, QCA and teacher assessments
- Systematic marksheet creation is then easier
- Spread the data entry task – you need back-up
- We chose on-site training so we could focus on our own data
- Communication with colleagues is crucial – they need to know what data is important and why. I taught staff about average point scores – teachers are becoming action researchers
- Explain levels and standardised scores to parents
- Plan (with your Head) the reports you will need for Governors' meetings

"The use of SIMS for tracking and analysing assessment data was recognised as a particular strength of the school."

Martin Pullen, Headteacher following the very recent Ofsted inspection

Latest News: Biggin Hill Junior School becomes a SIMS Partnership School



For many years Capita Education Services has been seeking leading edge users of its SIMS software. In the past these schools were known as 'Reference Sites' and were managed by Achievement Editor, Viv Nunn. This year the scheme has been further developed and re-launched as the 'Partnership Schools Programme', managed by Claire Ashton.



Since joining Capita Education Services in February 2006, Claire has been identifying what makes a good Partnership School and has been on the look out for new schools to expand the programme. After hearing about Biggin Hill Junior School from several colleagues, following the successful Mexican visit, Claire didn't think twice about making them a Partnership School.

After a short meeting with Martin Pullen and his key SIMS staff, Claire could see that they met the Partnership School criteria:

- Strategic leadership of Management Information**
 As Headteacher, Martin leads the development of Management Information Systems at the school and has planned well for its progression once he retires in July 2007
- An understanding of the benefits of using the full SIMS suite**
 The school identifies that holding all pupil information in one system improves efficiency
- Well trained and competent support staff**
 Training is given high priority for all users
- A commitment to quality technical systems**
 The school understands the importance of this for the smooth running of SIMS
- Appropriate distribution of responsibilities**
 There is no 'Mr' or 'Mrs SIMS' at Biggin Hill
- Integration of MIS into daily activity**
 SIMS is 'mission critical' at the school and accessed throughout the day by the SIMS users
- An awareness of weaknesses**
 Biggin Hill is comfortable in the knowledge that there are certain areas they still need to develop
- A willingness to develop**
 Biggin Hill is enthusiastic about developing SIMS further
- An enthusiasm to share**
 Biggin Hill shares its expertise and experience willingly with others, including the Mexican cohort of education ministers!



Benefits to schools:

A clear benefit to schools is complementary attendance of two school staff to the Partnership School's Annual Conference. The conference aims to further develop the school's use and application of the software through workshops and presentations from key Capita Education Services staff and other Partnership Schools. Delegates are also given further opportunity to share best practice at less formal times, such as, over dinner. Schools are then supported to develop relationships through online facilities and regional meetings.

This year's conference left Linda and Brigitte truly inspired!

Martin comments on their feedback:

"After seeing Rosie Simmonds (Head of Leverington Primary in Wisbech) present on how her primary school manages SIMS, Linda and Brigitte were reassured about our use of Assessment Manager and given ideas of how to develop. We now use Behaviour Management to support our school behaviour policy and will be developing the use of IEP Writer to develop personalised learning plans for all pupils."

Brigitte and Linda enthused:

"We found the networking really useful and loved the workshops delivered by the schools. We now have an understanding of how SIMS is managed in a secondary school and how secondaries perceive primaries. Attending the Assessment Manager 7 workshop delivered by the Product Manager helped us to see what is now possible with the new software; we really like the new features."

What was the most useful message of the conference?

Linda: "That teachers really need to use SIMS, even the basic areas such as the database. This is something that we will be developing."

Martin commented:

"The Partnership Programme is an excellent idea – it helps SIMS understand what goes on in schools, and helps schools share best practice with each other."

" We have received excellent telephone support from Capita Education Services (CES) on the few occasions when it has been needed. We also ensure that staff are properly trained – by CES."

Linda Brown, Biggin Hill's System Manager

Biggin Hill is supported in its use of SIMS by Capita's London & Southern Regional Centre.

Customer Relations Manager, Val McCoy:

"It is a pleasure working with the staff at Biggin Hill who are keen to embrace all the new SIMS developments and software.

We provide helpdesk support, training both at our Centre and on-site, to support the good work of the school.

We are delighted that their hard work has been recognised by the SIMS Partnership Award!"

Could you be a Partnership School?

If you think your school could meet the requirements or you would like to find out more, please contact Claire Ashton via claire.ashton@capita.co.uk quoting reference Ach/SPS.

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