Welcome to Firefly
Your first steps to get started

The following document is intended to guide you through the initial steps required to get up and running, as well as help you make the most of your new learning platform.

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Setting up your server

The accompanying technical document provides information about hardware requirements for setting up Firefly on your server. You should ensure that this is up and running at a basic level before you proceed with the steps which follow.

Integrating Firefly with SIMS

Once your Firefly site is up and running, you will want to configure integration with your MIS, SIMS. With all supported MISs, we can pull groups/sets, timetables and staff/student profiles, useful when setting tasks and permissions in your site. However, because every school uses its MIS in a slightly different way, please contact us at **support@fireflysolutions.co.uk** or by phone on **020 8133 4415** for help with this process.

Planning your site

It is a good idea to have a broad strategic plan for your Firefly site early in the process. You will want to consider how you will stimulate staff and student participation, as well as market the site to the wider school community including parents. More concretely, you will want to consider how the main structure of the site will be laid out.

You don't need to worry about working through this process alone since we're here to help. To help you with your initial thoughts, we've published a Learning Platform Owner's Manual written by a school Head of ICT and intended to offer advice to clients on some of these matters, based on experience with other schools. It's available to download as an e-book from: http://fireflysolutions.co.uk/blog/download-our-free-learning-platform-owners-manual

Choosing a name for internal/external access

With your Firefly installation running successfully, you should pick a name that you'll use for both internal and external access to each site (the same should always be used for both), then configure internal and external DNS appropriately to point the name to the Firefly server. An example might be http://intranet.yourschool.org.uk. See "Post-installation steps" in the accompanying technical pages.

Book a planning meeting

One of your first steps should be to book a planning meeting with a member of our team, which is included in your set up cost. This meeting takes place at the school and should ideally be attended by a senior member of academic staff (e.g. a Deputy Head or other member of the senior leadership team), as well as key figures from your ICT department and any other Heads of Departments or teachers interested or closely involved in the project. The meeting will typically take a couple of hours and will seek to address the following, as well as any additional matters you may wish to cover:

- Choosing from a variety of template options for your Firefly site
- Discussing issues around setting up a suitable menu structure
- Discussing options for training and roll-out of Firefly
- Checking any issues around migration of any pre-existing
- content
- Checking the progress of installation and MIS integration and identifying any possible holdups

The meeting should be held in a room at the school equipped with a computer and internet access.

You should book your planning meeting by contacting us by e-mail at **support@fireflysolutions.co.uk** or telephone on **020 8133 4415**.

Arranging your branded intranet template

You will probably wish to have a template for use with your new Firefly site that reflects your own school's branding. You have two options to choose from, depending on the level of design customisation you require - these can be decided on at your planning meeting (see above):

Get a customised version of one of our out-of-the box templates (included)

With this option we will customise one of our out-of-the-box templates, designed by the award-winning Clearleft agency, to suit your branding. This includes placing your logo, school name as well as minor changes to the default colour scheme. To complete this process, we need only for you to provide a high-resolution copy of your logo (preferably in PDF or EPS format), along with details of your preferred colours and fonts. Please also specify if there is a particular out-of-the-box template you would like yours based on (e.g. Traditional, Scrapbook…). If you have a style guide for your school's brand, a copy of this would be ideal too.

(or) Commission a completely custom template based on a design of your choice (£4,750 excluding tax)

If you have particular requirements for the layout or styling of your intranet site and your budget allows, you may want to consider commissioning a completely custom template. Contact us by e-mail or phone and we'll be able to book a meeting for you with a member of our design team.

Book a training day

Your set up cost also includes a day of training at your school led by a member of our team. Schools often organise training days as part of their INSET programme, when the majority of staff are available to attend.

Our standard format for the day consists of two one-hour workshop sessions with each set of up to 15 staff. The first workshop session covers basic first steps such as creating new pages, working with text, images and links, as well as video and audio content. The second covers interactive tasks such as setting assignments and tests online for completion by students, as well as using the Dashboard page and pushing tasks out to other users.

We can offer a degree of flexibility if you wish to organise your training day differently, though please discuss this with us in advance. We're also very happy to arrange additional days or trainers at our standard daily rate (£550 excluding tax).

Getting help

Remember that we are here should you need advice or want to discuss any ideas you may have. We may also be able to put you in touch with other clients who have trodden similar paths, so that they might offer advice. Call us on **020 8133 4415**.

Preparing a server for Firefly

Firefly should run fine on most reasonably modern servers. However, we recommend the following as a guideline to ensure optimal performance.

Hardware requirements

Hard disk: We suggest a minimum of 80Gb of hard disk space to begin with. Whilst the basic Firefly software itself will use only approximately 40Mb, further space will quickly become needed as the site grows and more resources are uploaded.

Processor: Most recent processors, e.g. Intel Xeon, will suffice. For optimal performance, however, we recommend a dual-core model or greater.

RAM: 2Gb minimum. Note: The more memory available, the better your experience of Firefly will be. This is often the single most influential factor affecting performance of school servers and bearing in mind the relative low cost of memory, it is always a worthwhile investment.

Firefly will run equally well on either a physical or virtual server, including 64-bit machines. If you operate a virtualised environment, we suggest you run Firefly on its own virtual machine as this helps avoid any potential conflicts with other services running on the server. Note that Firefly needs to be able to run on the default web ports (80 and 443).

Software requirements

Your server should be running Windows Server 2008 or higher, and should have the following components installed/enabled:

- NET Framework 3.5 or higher (to download the latest version, go to www.microsoft.com/net/download)
- IIS 7 or higher
- SQL Server 2008 with Advanced Services (enable Mixed Authentication Mode and Full Text Search), or higher
- ASP.NET enabled
- Windows Authentication enabled (see http://lantern.fireflysolutions.co.uk/lantern/hints-and-tips/enabling-windows-authentication for further information)
- Static Content enabled
- Microsoft Access Database Engine 2010 Redistributable (http://www.microsoft.com/download/en/details.aspx?id=13255 - ensure you choose the 32-bit version, even if your server is 64-bit)

Downloading Firefly

You should have received by e-mail a set of login credentials to access Lantern, our client technical community site. If you did not receive these, please e-mail support@fireflysolutions.co.uk to request them from us. Once you have your login credentials, you're ready to go to http://lantern.fireflysolutions.co.uk and download the latest copy of the Firefly installer, which you'll find under **Releases**. You'll also find on Lantern a set of installation instructions, as well as documentation for setting up integration with SIMS and other extra functionality.

Common questions

- **Can I run Firefly on the same server as the database?**
  - o Yes, you can run Firefly on the same machine as the database it uses, or on a separate machine. If you choose to move your Firefly database at a later point for whatever reason, you will find it configured on the server in Firefly Manager, under the Configuration tab > Database.
- **Can I run Firefly on the same server as other services, e.g. SIMS?**
  - o You can, though we strongly recommend you run Firefly on a separate server from other services, including your MIS, particularly if your server environment is virtualised as this can be done with relative ease and only moderate expense. It also gives you more flexibility to upgrade components independently. Note that this is different from running Firefly on the same server as the database, or storing the Firefly database on the same server as those used by other services, both of which should not cause any issues.
- **Can I place the Firefly resources directory on a network drive?**
  - o No, currently the resources directory has to be on drive that is mapped at the device level.

Post-installation steps

Setting up DNS

Having chosen the domain to be used to access each site, you will need to configure the domain's DNS both internally and externally so that it points to the Firefly server, making the site accessible. If you have multiple Firefly sites, you will want to do the same for all of these. For example, if you have "vle.myschool.org.uk" and "alumni.myschool.org.uk", the DNS records for both of these domains should simply point to the Firefly server. You do not need to be concerned that both site domains are pointing to the same address - when users request any of these sites, the Firefly server will identify the URL requested and use stored Friendly URL information in order to serve the correct site.

Enabling access through your firewall

As well as configuring each Firefly site domain in IIS, you will also need to ensure it is accessible via the web by opening up the appropriate ports on your firewall. You may need to contact your LEA if they control/host your firewall, or consult documentation specific to your model.

Install an SSL certificate and enable forms-based login

You will want to consider purchasing and configuring a Secure Socket Layer (SSL) certificate for each of your domains that use Firefly. Alternatively, you can purchase a wildcard SSL certificate for all subdomains within a single top level domain, which can prove more cost-effective. Aside from offering greater security, having SSL also means that you will be able to benefit from forms-based login screens, offering users a more consistent experience when logging into your sites from different computers or devices and using different browsers.

Once you have your SSL certificate installed, we recommend you enable the option to redirect into SSL for login, which you'll find in the Tools menu > Manage this site > Control Panel > Modify site > [select your site], under the URL tab. You'll find more information about this procedure in various versions of Windows Server, on Lantern:

http://lantern.fireflysolutions.co.uk/lantern/hints-and-tips/forms-based-authentication

Local Intranet Zone

Placing your Firefly learning platform in the Local Intranet Zone has the advantage of removing the need for users to enter login credentials when accessing the site from within school. We recommend you push this out to all users using Group Policy. If you have an SSL certificate running on your site(s), you'll need to add HTTPS addresses for these to the Local Intranet Zone too, e.g. https://intranet.myschool.org.uk in addition to http://intranet.myschool.org.uk.

You'll find more information on how to do this, on Lantern:

http://lantern.fireflysolutions.co.uk/lantern/hints-and-tips/enabling-automatic-login

Set up network drive access to the Resources area (WebDAV)

For the convenience of your users, it is possible to map the Resources area in Firefly as a network drive. This allows users to transfer large volumes of files into Firefly more easily, as entire sets of folders can be copied across simply using drag-and-drop. To set this up, you need to map a drive to the address of your site followed by "/Resources", e.g. "http://intranet.myschool.org.uk/Resources". You might want to consider adding this to the login script for all users.

Note that access via this method fully respects permissions defined in Firefly and that users should have the same access rights to resource files and folders as they would have via the Resource Manager.

Run Health Check

Having followed the steps above, it's worth running the Firefly Health Check. This is a tool allowing you to see what features have been correctly set up and configured, as well as any points that remain to be addressed in order for you to make the very most of your site and ensure the best experience for your users. It's also worth running this after every upgrade of Firefly, in case we add new features that you'll want to ensure are correctly set up.

Only Firefly administrators can run the Health Check, which you'll always find in the Tools menu under Manage this site.

Backing up your Firefly sites

It is essential not to underestimate the importance of ensuring that all your Firefly data is carefully backed up daily, as with time this will grow to include a large pool of vital school information, not to mention many hours of work. You should ensure that a rigorous and comprehensive backup solution is in place from the start, which covers all of the following data:

- Your Firefly SQL database (see http://lantern.fireflysolutions.co.uk/lantern/hints-and-tips/backup)
- Your resources directory (you will find the location of this in the Configuration tab > Resources and WebDAV > Folder in Firefly Manager on your Firefly server)
- Your Firefly installation directory (typically located at "C:\Program Files (x86)\Firefly.NET")

We recommend that you backup to a physically separate device, if at all possible. Should your server suffer a physical failure, your backup is less likely to be compromised along with your live data.

Note: It's important to test your backups regularly and ensure that they work properly, perhaps by using them to restore Firefly on a spare server. Never assume that a backup file which exists is one which works!

More hints and tips on Lantern...

Lantern is the Firefly client technical community site, which aside from offering our latest software releases, is also where you'll find a range of useful documentation as well as tips, code samples and more. **You'll find it at:** http://lantern.fireflysolutions.co.uk (login required)