OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE

How can it help our school?

WHAT IS OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE?

- Open Source Software (OSS for short) is software developed by the community which has freely available source code so that anyone can modify it.

- It is normally released under a license such as Gnu, Mozilla Public License or Creative Commons.

- Open Source Software can improve the school with its highly developed solutions to everyday education problems and save money as it is totally free!
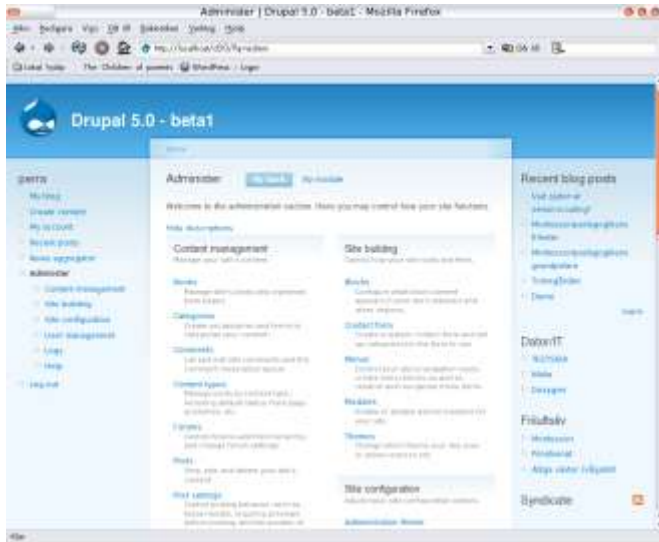
WHAT SOFTWARE COULD BENEFIT OUR SCHOOL?

- In the next six slides I will be explaining six open source solutions. These are:
  - Drupal, a content management system
  - iTALC, a classroom manager for teachers
  - Linux, a free operating system
  - Moodle, a learning management system
  - OpenOffice, an office suite like Microsoft Office
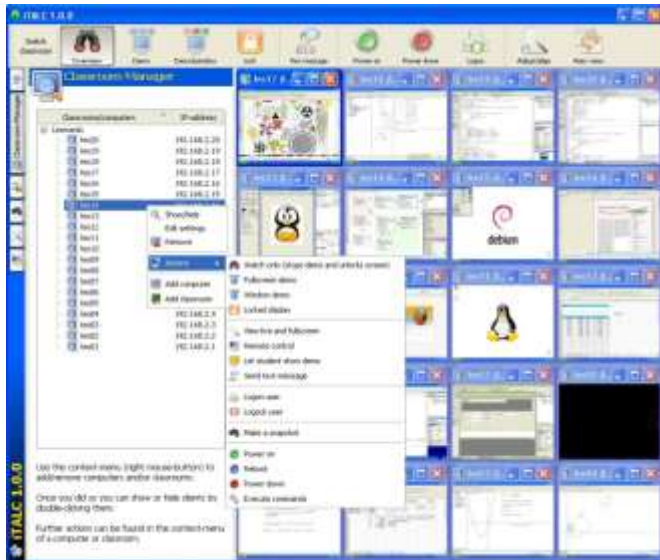 - Firefox, a powerful and secure web browser

DRUPAL

- Drupal is an open source content management system used by tens of thousands of websites.
- It has a big developer community who are always working to improve its functionality.
- It could be used to manage the school intranet website. Staff and IT technicians can add notices and other information to the intranet site with no knowledge of website development using a word processor-like interface.
- It could also be used for the school's Internet website(s). Teachers and administrative staff could finally have the ability to update the website without the help of the technicians.

ɪTALC

- iTALC is an open source classroom management application designed for schools which supports Microsoft Windows and Linux.

- It allows teachers and IT staff to view the screens of network users and perform functions such as sending popup messages, turning off the computer and locking the screens whilst explaining something.

- It could be used as a replacement for the current system in place, which is very expensive and has no additional features compared to this totally free alternative.

- It is very simple to set up, and could be automatically deployed over the network.

LINUX

- Linux is almost certainly the most well known piece of open source software. You may recognise its iconic symbol, the Tux.

- It is a free alternative to closed source retail operating systems such as Microsoft Windows and Apple Mac OS X.

- It comes in many flavours known as distributions (or distros for short). Some popular distros include Ubuntu, Damn Small Linux (DSL) and Freespire.

- It is very secure, with next to no viruses written for it.

- The obvious major benefit is that it is free. The commercial operating systems cost many thousands of pounds for a whole school license, whereas Linux is free and there are different versions available for different uses.
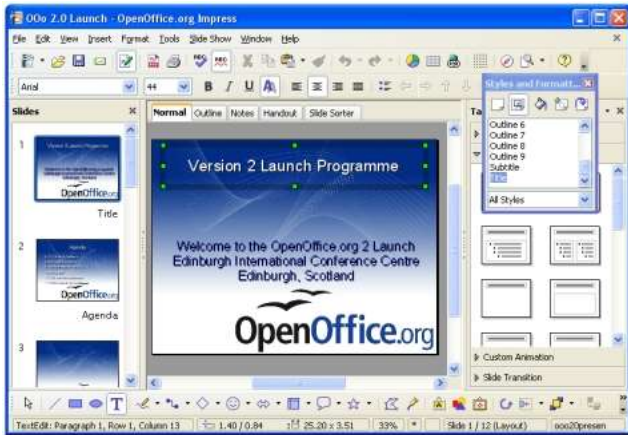
MOODLE

- Moodle is a free open source learning management system programmed in PHP.

- It would be a good alternative to handing out homework sheets and could aid students in doing their homework.

- Teachers can create chat rooms and forums so that students can help each other with homework and so that the teacher can give assistance where necessary.

- You can also create a wiki to explain topics to students or a quiz which you can see the results of.

- Perhaps the most useful feature is that you can add homework assignments so that pupils can read them again in full online and download necessary sheets so there is no risk of losing them.

OPENOFFICE

- OpenOffice is probably the second most prolific piece of open source software.
- It is a full office suite, much like Microsoft Office and iWork, which is available on Windows, Mac and Linux.
- It is compatible with documents from the market leader, Microsoft Office.
- It includes five components: Writer (a word processor), Impress (a presentation maker), Math (an advanced scientific/graphing calculator), Draw (a powerful graphics package), Calc (a spreadsheet application) and Base (a database manager).
- It contains more applications that Microsoft Office, and best of all, it's totally free!
- It has almost all the functionality of commercial office applications.

FIREFOX

- Firefox is an extremely popular web browser created by the Mozilla Foundation.

- It has tabbed browsing like Internet Explorer, but it also has support for extensions and themes, which can add much more functionality.

- It supports all of the major web standards including SVG (Scalable Vector Graphics) which Internet Explorer does not support natively.

- Firefox is available on nearly all platforms including Windows.

- One of the main reasons people should move to Firefox is its security. Security holes are occasionally found, but normally they are fixed much more quickly than they are fixed by Microsoft.

WHY SWITCH TO OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE?

- It's free.
- Developed by users so it will have features that people want and not the company who created it.
- In most cases, usable across multiple platforms.
- Generally, it has the same functionality, if not more functionality.
- It can help make life easier for both students and teachers at once.
- The source is freely available so you can make changes if you want.