

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

London, 21 December 2009 – **Unique Partnership Brings Open Source to BETT**

There's at least one software stand at BETT this year where schools won't be sold any programs. This is the **Open Source Café** (L20), a stand provided through a unique partnership between the Becta supported Open Source Schools community and long standing promoters of open standards, Open Forum Europe. Instead, over coffee, visitors will find discussions and short presentations that will show how open source delivers cost-effective, robust and innovative technology for learning.

Some benefits of open source are:

- **Sustainability and value for money:** Open source undoubtedly makes more effective use of all of a school's resources, and web-based applications like Moodle and thin client solutions like Edubuntu allow schools to opt-out of the cycle of built-in obsolescence dictated by proprietary platforms. Bob Blatchford of Open Forum Europe said, "In the current economic climate schools' and colleges' IT budgets will be coming under increased pressure; we believe that open standards and open software will enable them to get the best possible value for money."
- **Creative computing:** Children's experience of ICT at school often offers little more excitement than presentation slides and spreadsheets, rather than the cutting edge of technology that open source brings. This is particularly true for computer programming itself, where creative open source platforms like Scratch, Alice and Greenfoot allow children and teenagers to discover for themselves the excitement of writing software to take control of their computer. Access to the source code demystifies how programs work and allows talented students to share in developing software alongside others. Getting young people interested in and involved with computing is vital for the future success of the UK software industry. There'll be more about this in **Open Source Schools BETT Seminar** at 15:45 on 13 January in the Solutions Theatre.
- **Safeguarding children and their data:** Open source programs extend the range of what a school can do with its computers, and thus Elgg, Wordpress and Mediawiki bring the power of Web 2.0 inside the school's or local authority's 'walled garden', allowing pupils to write creatively and collaboratively for an audience other than just their teacher and learn how to use the power of social networking safely, responsibly and productively.

Open Source Schools community manager and former head teacher, Miles Berry said, "Support for open source from Becta, Ofsted and the Cabinet Office was really encouraging in 2009, and thus it's no surprise that there's increasing interest in this software from pupils, teachers, schools and local authorities. These people are making the most of the freedom that open source brings to do what they want with technology, and I'm looking forward to hearing more of their stories at our BETT Café"

Just as open source is *different* from proprietary code, the **Open Source Café** at BETT offers a *different* sort of stand, with a rolling 'bar camp' style programme in which teachers, techies, school leaders and those able to provide commercial support will host half hour sessions sharing their experience and expertise in an informal, friendly environment. Rather good coffee and free discs loaded with open source software will be available for anyone interested in learning more about this priceless software – software that's more about unharnessing learning than harnessing technology.

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Notes for editors:

About Open Source Schools

Open Source Schools is a growing community of educators and technologists, supported by Becta, who want to share their knowledge, experience and insights of using open source software in education.
opensourceschools.org.uk

About Open Forum Europe

Open Forum Europe is a not-for-profit, independent organisation launched in March 2002 to accelerate, broaden and strengthen the use of open source software in business and government. OFE is supported by major IT suppliers and works closely with the European Commission and national governments.
www.openforumeurope.org

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