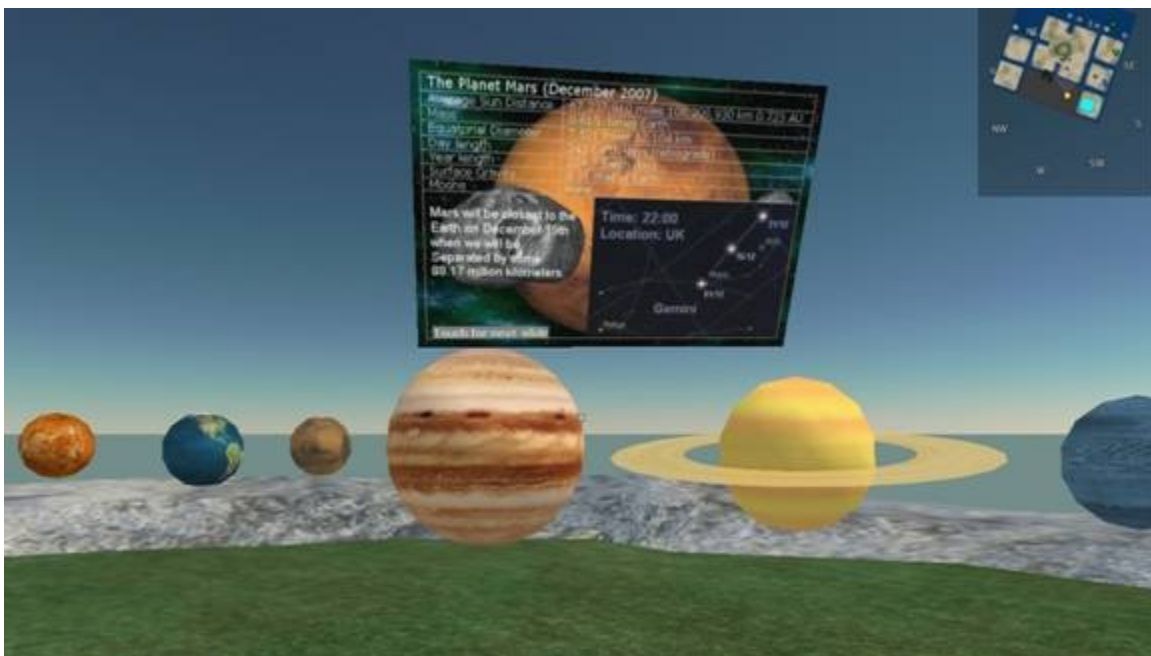




## **VLE Support shows futuristic lesson in Second Life**

BETT Show Stand K46: VLE Support, partner company to Atomwide

Under embargo until 9 January 2008: VLE Support is demonstrating the first futuristic lesson in Second Life at the BETT Show today. Having worked with St Dunstan's College, an independent school for 3 to 18 year olds, on the potential educational benefits of Second Life, VLE Support is ready to reveal some of its thinking.



*Above: screen grab from VLE Support's Astro-Park, showing first futuristic lesson in astronomy*

Second Life is a virtual world that was originally created as a geeky plaything, but now it has 15 million inhabitants and a thriving economy fuelled by well-known organisations from the BBC to Mercedes Benz through to Save the Children Charity. Mark Trinick, managing director of VLE Support, commented: “Given the phenomenal pace at which this virtual world has taken off - not just as a bit of fun but as a serious business proposition - some may argue that it is time to take a closer look at its educational potential. One of Second Life's greatest strength is collaboration and so we think it could form the basis of new partnerships or projects between schools. Another key area of interest is developing business acumen in young adults and we are working with St Dunstan's College and the Social Entrepreneur Project on this. Second Life is unique in that it operates a real economy but in a totally novel environment. The opportunities for entrepreneurs are significant, especially for the next generation of adults who will have grown up with gaming and the Web 2.0 phenomenon (FaceBook, YouTube, Wikipedia, and so on).”



Paul Glyne–Thomas, head of ICT at St Dunstan’s College, commented: “Although St Dunstan’s College is just at the planning stage, we are already very excited at the learning opportunities Second Life could offer us. In Second Life we can recreate spaces and objects that are difficult or prohibitively expensive in the real world, and so we could significantly expand the realms of what we can teach our pupils. For example, getting pupils to work in a team to build a raft to cross a river could be difficult in terms of safety and resources in the real world; in Second Life, pupils of all ages could attempt the challenge and learn from the experience without risk. Another example would be to conduct scientific experiments in Second Life that would be impossible in school because they require expensive and specialist equipment that we don’t have. The educational potential of Second Life appears endless; it is a case of identifying what will benefit the pupils most.”

VLE Support has begun creating a prototype school which currently contains various learning materials for IT lessons such as Learning PHP and SQL. It will be adding new areas to the school over time. For the purpose of the BETT Show, Barry Spencer, VLE Support’s VLE Curriculum director, created an ‘Astro-Park’ for lessons on astronomy (<http://slurl.com/secondlife/Daydream%20SE%20Islands/38/80/601>). The night sky is presented on a series of display board and updated each month. It tells students about the planets that are visible at that time. If students are finding it difficult to locate star groups on the display board, then they can use the ‘planisphere’ to get a more accurate perspective. This device shows the night sky objects visible relative to latitude, month and time. The domed-shaped observatory has a telescope and outside there is a ‘holodeck’ to show students what the Milky Way really looks like. And finally, visitors can wander around the park and see a large labeled model of the moon and each of the planets close up and spinning in front of them.

Mark Trinick concluded: “We developed the ‘Astro-Park’ as a taster of what could be achieved, but the potential for learning in Second Life goes much further.”

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**For more information, screen grabs or an interview with Mark Trinick, managing director of VLE Support, please contact:**

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**Notes to editors:**

VLE Support is the only company in the UK to provide an all-in-one package for education and commercial sectors introducing virtual learning environments (VLEs). It facilitates the installation, configuration, training, maintenance and support of VLEs. Focused on Moodle software, it offers a comprehensive package of training and support for teachers, trainers, administrators and support staff. VLE Support also designs and develops bespoke content ranging from enhanced static documents to fully interactive multi-media presentations. Some of VLE Support's most recent work has been around the educational benefits of the virtual world, Second Life. Clients include Bromley College of Further and Higher Education, St Dunstan's College and the London Ambulance Service.

Visit: [www.vlesupport.co.uk](http://www.vlesupport.co.uk)