

Primary School Real Story

Sythwood Primary School



Structured performance management supports tailored professional learning at Surrey primary school

Self-evaluation system provides clear feedback and identifies development areas

About the school

Sythwood Primary School is a larger than average, co-educational school, in Woking, Surrey, with 600 pupils aged 2 – 11 years old. It became an academy in 2013 and is in the process of expanding from a two-form to a three-form entry school, so that by 2017 its Published Admission Number (PAN) will be 90 in all year groups. Rated as 'good' by Ofsted, the school prides itself on its creativity – its motto is 'Great Learning, Great Challenge, Great Fun'. Situated in a relatively deprived area with high pupil mobility, the school roll includes above average numbers of children with EAL, FSM and SEN requirements.

What were the challenges?

As a large primary, with 30 teachers, collating performance management and monitoring data had been challenging. The school's senior leadership team needed support in collating data and tracking individual progress. In turn, teachers wanted to have clear feedback and up-to-date assessment.

The main requirements were:-

- To allow teachers to self-review targets
- To provide a structure for performance management, allowing the senior leadership team to have an overview of targets set
- To provide self-evaluation documents allowing clear feedback for learning walks and book scrutiny
- To highlight areas for training and development

How is BlueSky helping?

Nicola Wilmshurst is deputy head and the senior leadership team member responsible for BlueSky.

"I can't imagine handling performance management without BlueSky," she said. "It supports all our training and development for teachers and support staff alike, not only by ensuring that everyone's review has taken place on time, but also by providing a structure and allowing the SLT to have an overview of targets set."

“ I can't imagine handling performance management without BlueSky. ”

Nicola Wilmhurst, Deputy Head, Sythwood Primary School



“Every member of staff completes a self review prior to a meeting with their line manager. Areas to work on are clearly identified and used to inform performance management. Armed with that information we can run reports, look for common areas of need and tailor professional development activities towards that. For example, recently we put on some specific training for phonics for KS1 support staff who were supporting SEN pupils – a requirement identified by our BlueSky system.

“Self-evaluation documents allow the SLT to pull together strengths and areas for development immediately after a learning walk or book scrutiny so that we can amend our School Improvement Plan straight away. In this way we ensure that we are using the data to move the school forward.”

What is the impact?

Sythwood is benefitting from the clarity that the BlueSky system is providing.

“It is helping with our overall school improvement and giving individual members of staff much clearer feedback,” said Nicola. “Our governors particularly like it as it gives them a full picture of exactly where we are at any given moment in time.

“Our staff are very positive too. They like the fact that they can see clearly where their strengths are and there is no ambiguity – if a target is not met it is clearly stated, as is the action necessary for improvement.

“We keep the momentum going with termly updates. Other relevant deadlines, such as reminders for reviewing standards for example, are given at staff meetings. I have regular phone calls with BlueSky so I can continually move forwards with it – for example we have added nine self-evaluation frameworks in the last six months.

“All our staff now have up-to-date performance management, with reviews. Our SLT can see trends in observations, learning walks and book scrutiny. Regular school improvement entries focus the support and the continuous professional learning we offer teachers.

“Such clear feedback and performance management is improving teaching and learning practice and therefore having a positive impact on pupil progress.

“BlueSky's customer service and support is brilliant and this has helped us move forward. I have had regular updates and guidance where they suggest the next step for us.

What's next?

“BlueSky has made us much more efficient and helps us to generate reports that would otherwise be very time-consuming – and that's if they were possible at all! So I'm determined to continue with the regular contact and updates from BlueSky so that we stay on top of things.”

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