

Special Schools Real Story

The Priory, Garth and John Fielding Special Schools /
Community Inclusive Trust South



CIT South benefits from aligned system for performance management and vital staff training

BlueSky solution provides bespoke support to help meet statutory training requirements for healthcare and SEN.

About the school

CIT South caters for some of the most vulnerable children in Lincolnshire – pupils with wide-ranging special educational needs.

It comprises three schools – The Garth School and the John Fielding Community Special School are both for pupils aged between 2 and 19 with complex, severe and profound learning difficulties; while The Priory School is for pupils aged 11 to 16, with moderate learning difficulties, many of whom have Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Ofsted rates Garth as ‘outstanding’ and the Priory and John Fielding as ‘good’.

CIT South’s aim is to prepare pupils for the challenges of adult life, including the world of work, continuing education and independent living.

What were the challenges?

CIT South’s Executive Head Teacher Daran Bland originally joined The Priory School as Head Teacher in 2005, before the formation of a Federation with The Garth School in 2007. “I can remember the frustrations at that time of having a number of school improvement and development quality assurance

systems that were either paper-based or situated in different locations on separate computers,” he said. “What we wanted was coherence, convenience and efficiency.

“We also needed to be able to synchronise performance management targets and outcomes and to track how those contributed to general improvements as identified in our School Improvement Plan. But none of our systems were talking to each other.

“There is also a particular challenge for special schools in that we have to meet statutory requirements for regular and frequent staff training in healthcare and specific SEN issues. The level and intensity of training required is well over and above those found in a mainstream school, on top of which there is a need for annual refresher training; for example in epilepsy, moving and handling, specific behaviour management and restraint, poolside rescue and gastrostomy tube feeding.

“It is therefore obviously vital that we have an overview of which staff have which training and when it needs to be refreshed.

“BlueSky provides senior leaders with access to quality-assured information, allowing an accurate overview of what areas are working well and conversely highlighting those areas which may need more energy and focus.”

Daran Bland, Executive Head Teacher of CIT South.



How is BlueSky helping?

“The web-based functionality offered by BlueSky has proved particularly useful as we have grown as a collective of schools,” continued Daran. “We are able to add to the information we have, to analyse it and most importantly to utilise it. You don’t need to be at any specific school to make good use of it.

“All staff are working towards common priorities through their training. All performance management objectives are on BlueSky so we can also link training to our people’s personal objectives which impacts positively on us all. We can also ensure all staff training is up-to-date.

“When the John Fielding School joined us 18 months ago it was experiencing some difficulties in terms of school improvement and standards, so BlueSky has been a great tool for supporting their staff development, appraisals and school improvement work. While the school is still on a journey we all have greater clarity over what we are trying to achieve.

What is the impact?

“There is now a triangulated approach to where we are collectively headed – performance management informs our training needs, priorities and opportunities and link directly to school improvement planning.

“We can really drill down into specific aspects to support individual teacher development and improvement, and also to identify areas requiring group or whole school development.

“BlueSky provides senior leaders with access to quality-assured information, allowing an accurate

overview of what areas are working well and conversely highlighting those areas which may need more energy and focus. The information and evidence is all there.

“All our staff training is logged onto the BlueSky CPL module which has replaced an inefficient system including staff signatures on paper. We are also finding the Self-Evaluation module increasingly useful as we become more sophisticated users, for example creating bespoke templates so we can add criteria more relevant to us as a special school.

“I find the BlueSky reports are also great for presenting information to bodies such as our governors, Ofsted and the local authority.

“It is definitely value for money.

What’s next?

“We will continue to develop our use of BlueSky as a high priority. We also intend to work with the staff there to develop the training database so that we will be able to receive email alerts when refresher training is due.”

© BlueSky Education November 2016

RS-15-1116

“I find the BlueSky reports are also great for presenting information to bodies such as our governors, Ofsted and the local authority.”

Daran Bland, Executive Head Teacher of CIT South.