

Primary School

Barnby Road Academy, Newark



Updating our model for whole school teaching and learning

Putting staff in charge of their own development, and fostering a culture of openness

About the school

Barnby Road Academy is a non-selective primary school based in Newark in Nottinghamshire. Judged 'outstanding' by Ofsted, Barnby Road Academy is proud of its community focus as well as its reputation for sport and the creative arts. As a large primary over with 500 children the school has recently expanded to accommodate demand. The school's motto is 'to be a school where everyone is able to achieve their best' and the wellbeing of pupils is its number one priority. Barnby Road Academy has a good blend of experience and youthful enthusiasm amongst its teachers who help to maintain its 'outstanding' Ofsted rating.

What were the challenges?

Although already rated 'outstanding' Barnby Road Academy was keen to develop an updated model for whole school teaching and learning. David Webster, Head of Upper School, was also keen to revise performance management so staff were in charge of their own development; "As part of my NPQH (National Professional Qualification for Headship) I was eager to ensure we were fostering a culture of openness and development amongst staff."

"I also wanted to ensure that as a school we had a learning culture not just among pupils but among staff too. Furthermore, we wanted to be able to maintain a continuous and sustained improvement in teaching and learning, ensuring the system we used would enable staff to manage their own development whilst still enabling oversight for the senior leadership team.

"After considering various options with the Head of Lower School, we found BlueSky to be the perfect match."

David Webster, Head of Upper School
at Barnby Road Academy in Newark.

“We also use BlueSky for all of our monitoring, including book analysis. We knew when initiating the new system that we wanted to avoid anything that was paper-based and BlueSky is perfect for this.”

David Webster, Head of Upper School at Barnby Road Academy in Newark.



How is BlueSky supporting Barnby Road Academy?

“BlueSky has really allowed staff to lead their own development. Staff are able to monitor their own performance and log their development journey in BlueSky - we think of it as their rucksack to collect evidence of their progress. The senior leadership team can then monitor performance throughout the year rather than carrying out assessments on a designated date for which staff prepare.

“This means we have a clear understanding of where individuals are and any additional training needs they may have. BlueSky provides us with a helicopter view of whole-school improvement and also allows us to drill down into the granular details of an individual’s performance and where they fit into whole school improvement.

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What is the impact?

“Staff have really bought into BlueSky and are now using it to log their own development. Before deciding on BlueSky as our new model, we conducted a survey of staff attitudes and it was clear everyone was ready for change. Ensuring that staff would use the new system was essential and thanks to the strength of the support we received from BlueSky, including training and unlimited use of the BlueSky helpline, this need has definitely been met.

“We also view BlueSky as a way of investing in our staff. We give them time to ensure they’re able to use BlueSky effectively and as they log their progress throughout the year it saves considerable time and prevents panic when it comes to performance reviews - all the information is already there at the click of a button.

“We’ve had a particular focus on marking and feedback, and using self-evaluation to improve standards here. The senior leadership team use BlueSky to monitor improvements, and as the information is all in one place it’s easy to show our findings to governors and demonstrate the progress that has been made.”

What’s next?

“We are keen to examine classroom timings i.e. is there too much teaching and not enough learning?

“Being able to carry out evaluations and feed back to staff throughout the year means that we now have a culture of continuous improvement - our hour long observations are a thing of the past with huge benefits to whole school teaching and learning.”

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David Webster, Head of Upper School at Barnby Road Academy in Newark.

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