

## Multi-Academy Trust Real Story

### Windsor Academy Trust



## Supporting collaboration through standardising practices

### How a successful MAT standardises processes and encourages collaboration whilst maximising training opportunities for staff

#### About the school

Windsor Academy Trust is a family of nine academies, four secondaries and five primaries based in the West Midlands. Currently serving over 7,000 children, the Trust has plans for measured growth which is underpinned by the capacity to support schools that join us. We have exciting plans to open two free schools to serve our Walsall and Sandwell communities of schools.

Maximising personal potential as well as academic achievement is the key aim of the Trust. Particular emphasis is also placed on the quality of teaching and learning, knowing that the best way to improve education is through staff performing at their best, supported by great professional development.

#### What were the challenges?

Alison Halford, Strategic Lead for Professional Learning at Windsor Academy Trust first started using BlueSky a decade ago at the Trust's founding school, Windsor High School:

“Over this time the school has utilised BlueSky to manage performance and training for teaching and support staff. However, as we grew to become a collegiate group of schools we encountered new challenges, with the need to consider some levels of standardisation of operations as well as improving cross-school collaboration. We decided on where to standardise in consultation with the senior leaders who saw key benefits in aligned practices around appraisals and HR practice.

“As a Trust which puts professional development at the heart of improving teaching and learning and leadership in our schools, we needed a system for performance management which would allow us to easily understand professional development needs and communicate training opportunities to staff. For us, professional development has never been about just ticking a box, where possible we want to track the impact on staff performance and growth in their capabilities with improved outcomes for pupils.

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**Alison Halford, Strategic Lead for Professional Learning, Windsor Academy Trust**



“Similarly, talent-spotting to support high potential staff to accelerate their development and feed into succession planning is important. We have some amazing people and we want to develop them and spread their magic still further across the Trust. Our excellent practitioners underpin the provision of CPL for others, modelling great practice, engaging in research and supporting the development of others.

“Finally we needed a system that was flexible and will support us as we expand. With a number of new schools on the cards, it’s important that we integrate these schools and staff into Trust-wide practices.”

### How is BlueSky helping?

“One of the ways that BlueSky is helping us achieve our objectives is through the new Partnership module. As the Trust has grown we’ve developed a number of roles which are Trust-wide, including lead practitioners in English, mathematics, science, art and humanities.

“Whilst these individuals are based largely in one school, it’s important that they are set objectives which span across the schools. Using the Partnership module we are able to set Trust-wide objectives, which senior leaders and lead practitioners can align with their own individual targets for development.

“Windsor Academy Trust also offers staff a huge range of professional development opportunities, including delivering the National Professional Qualifications for Middle and Senior Leadership. BlueSky allows us to put all of these development opportunities online so that staff can book on to them from any site. This ensures equal opportunities are presented to all our staff – another benefit when it comes to pay and performance reviews.”

### What is the impact?

“BlueSky has really helped us to be flexible as we continue to expand.

“All our schools now use BlueSky for appraisals. The central team is able to view the training that has been requested across our network and to check to see that appraisals from all schools have been completed.

“Being able to pull up and print off reports at speed is also hugely beneficial. For example, at a recent Ofsted inspection we were able to summon up the necessary information immediately, saving valuable time as well as presenting the inspectors with high quality up-to-date information.

“Centrally we coordinate a considerable volume of training, all of which goes onto BlueSky. This means teachers in all our schools can view the opportunities across the Trust and request to attend training relevant to them. The authorisation and cover process is then streamlined through BlueSky making the process simple and painless for our Senior Leadership Teams.

### What’s next?

Our current plans for BlueSky include utilising the BlueSky Review function during the staff appraisal process to determine skills, confidence and requirement against the Trust’s bespoke teaching and learning objectives. This will enable us to identify talent, to pair up appropriate staff and scope-out targeted training as part of our ‘Polishing Pedagogy Development Programme’.

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