

## Secondary School

Olchfa School, Swansea



# Reinvigorating professional learning, data analysis and performance management

**Paper processes have been replaced with a streamlined, integrated and easy-to-access online system**

### About the school

Olchfa School in Swansea is one of the largest secondary schools in Wales with 1,800 students aged 11-18, 110 teachers and 60 support staff. It has a mixed catchment with areas of social deprivation and privilege.

The school has developed iLearn, an innovative approach to curriculum planning and delivery, which encourages pupils to become reflective, confident, and independent learners. Olchfa School is also part of a network of Pioneer Schools leading the way in developing changes to the Welsh curriculum. After an Estyn inspection in February 2018, the school was deemed 'Excellent' in all five areas.

### What were the challenges?

Hugh Davies, Headteacher, and President at the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Cymru, and Rob Williams, Assistant Headteacher, introduced BlueSky in 2015. The school previously relied on a paper-based system which included various ways of capturing and recording information. However, they wanted to replace it with a more streamlined and efficient approach to produce a coherent, easy-to-access overview of performance across the school.

### How is BlueSky supporting Olchfa School?

BlueSky has enabled Olchfa School to bring together their data on quality assurance, details of performance management as well as content related to continuous professional development (CPD), all in one place.

“We are a very evaluative school and BlueSky helps us to fully analyse a range of information to ensure ongoing standards of excellence in teaching and learning.”

Rob Williams, Assistant Headteacher  
at Olchfa School in Swansea.

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BlueSky provides leaders at the school with an evidence-based analysis of performance and a deep understanding of the impact of CPD. It removes the risk of performance management being reduced to a tick-box exercise and helps to drive improvement methodically and consistently.

### What is the impact?

The school's CPD team has streamlined the handling of CPD and training requests by using BlueSky so that cover can be arranged as part of the process and other relevant departments such as finance can be notified automatically. Although budget resources for staff development are small, BlueSky equips the school with an efficient system which saves staff time and eradicates needless duplication.

BlueSky also provides teachers and support staff with the opportunity to evaluate training and give their opinion on its effectiveness. This is a significant step forward which allows staff to contribute to and feel part of the process and provision.

BlueSky has enabled the school to improve the management of lesson observations. Olchfa School now has a centralised system with ongoing book scrutiny and live recording of observations, many completed in the classroom directly on BlueSky, with rapid verbal feedback followed up by written feedback. The observation templates originally included rating scales but they have been replaced with narrative boxes and audit areas providing a development focus for observations.

“With BlueSky, it is now a quicker, more responsive approach to observations, which is important in a large school and appreciated by staff,” says Rob Williams, Assistant Headteacher.

Book scrutiny using BlueSky has also helped teachers to engage with the Welsh Teacher Standards. Staff are aware that books are randomly evaluated and that feedback will be given quickly and recorded on BlueSky for viewing. The book scrutiny process has led to significant improvement in the quality of pupil books.

“We are a very evaluative school and BlueSky helps us to fully analyse a range of information to ensure ongoing standards of excellence in teaching and learning,” Rob adds.

### What's next?

Olchfa School is looking to use BlueSky to help develop its priorities, in particular, the Self Evaluation element. Overall, the school is still on a journey but BlueSky is helping greatly with progress.

“BlueSky is enabling the line manager to set objectives and record their decisions and recommendations rapidly, improving communication and therefore the relationship between the individual and line manager. Staff are engaged with and value BlueSky.”

Rob Williams, Assistant Headteacher  
at Olchfa School in Swansea.

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