

Development and research centre report complex pupil data with confidence after migrating to SIMS

School Profile

Name
 Swiss Cottage School

School Category
 Maintained

School type
 Special

Pupil roll
 230

Age range of pupils
 2 to 19

LA
 Camden, London

Swiss Cottage is an outstanding school in the London Borough of Camden, accommodating children aged 2-19 with diverse learning, emotional, behavioural and communication difficulties, and those on the Autistic Spectrum Continuum (ASC).

Committed to providing high quality learning opportunities, the school also helps to develop a sense of confidence and high aspiration. Staff use a mentoring coaching approach to teaching, which encourages pupils to take an active role and responsibility in their learning journey.

The school's new state-of-the-art building offers world-class facilities which support learners' development.

Swiss Cottage is also a Teaching School, leading an alliance of schools and other partners to develop the quality of teaching, learning and pupil progress across a number of schools in the borough and beyond.

School's Objectives

Swiss Cottage School was dissatisfied with their existing MIS system and database due to very poor analysis and reporting, which put them in a frustrating position with governors and various government departments. The development and research centre is part of a forum with other schools, but was unable to produce equivalent reports.

“The experience we have had with SBS and the positive working relationships that we have developed have left us feeling very optimistic about the decision to switch.

Clare Crawford
 School Business Manager



Because of the inadequate quality of the existing MIS database, the school had purchased several other software packages to compensate for system shortfalls. This left users with conflicting information, duplicate data entry and inconsistent reporting, consequently putting a strain on the workforce.

The school needed a system that would revolutionise its reporting, analysis and internal processes.

How SBS services helped

SBS suggested SIMS as an alternative to the current system that was not fit for purpose. SIMS was deemed far superior to the existing MIS, incorporating specific, relevant and user-friendly areas covering all the school's key processes. SBS was able to facilitate planning meetings with the Headteacher, School Business Manager and other key decision makers to be able to manage expectations, ensuring the school felt supported and confident with the decision at all stages.

Undertaking such a significant change in systems and processes, Swiss Cottage needed complete confidence that the project implementation and end result were exactly what they envisaged and had been promised.



“We know that there is effective support there for us from SBS as we develop our use of SIMS across the school and, as a School Business Manager who has made the sizable investment in the programme, this is reassuring!

Clare Crawford
School Business Manager

SBS devised a project plan with clear deadlines for each stage of the migration, including data transfers, hardware and software installations, training, go live and post-migration support.

SBS worked with the school to cleanse and re-format the school data from a number of different sources. As expected, inconsistencies in the data were uncovered, but effective solutions were found to manipulate the data in order to import into SIMS. The database was then built off-site, so as not to impact the school infrastructure or staff in any way.

It was imperative to obtain the correct specifications for servers, clients, operating systems, network and IT infrastructure, SBS liaised with RM ICT support to implement the newly migrated database, allowing all key contacts access to back-end systems and updating individual workstations.

As a special school that develops its students, ensuring they maintain the same education and curriculum as pupils in mainstream schools, Swiss Cottage School had unique requirements to be able to record specific courses of action to resolve incidents using customised templates and user defined fields.

All work took place during school holidays to save downtime and avoid any disruption, allowing an initial inset day to be utilised for postmigration training. The one day training needed to encompass over 200 specialised staff members with varying levels of MIS experience. Bespoke training was delivered in large groups, allowing sufficient time to ensure clear understanding and Q&A sessions. The consultant was on-hand for subsequent training needs and ongoing queries. Throughout the project, SBS was in constant communication with Swiss Cottage providing progress updates and assurances throughout.

School Business Manager; Clare Crawford, commented; “Having just moved into a new school building, and dealing with a variety of different consultants and external providers during the process, our experience with SBS was a breath of fresh air - customer service sometimes feels like a precious commodity nowadays, but it is clearly in the forefront of their thinking.” Driving this project forward for this school was clear cut and made very easy from a consultant and company’s point of view, it felt very natural for SBS to want to be part of this project. It was immediately apparent that from teaching assistants all the way to the headteacher, every single member of staff put their heart and soul in to the school and children.



The impact

Swiss Cottage School was able to remove the overlapping systems and work from a single, integrated database of student and staff information. There was a significant and immediate improvement in data input and analysis, providing staff with the freedom to teach. The system was faster and more reliable, both technically and for data integrity. Although it was much more user-friendly, SBS supplied relevant reference sheets to aid ongoing development.

The school was able to benefit from a wide range of reporting capabilities, ensuring best value from the captured data to create mail merges, list reports and extended analysis. SIMS custom reporting enabled the data team and other key members of staff to evaluate and compare trends in behaviour for escalation to parents, SLT and external departments when necessary.

During Ofsted inspection, the school was able to demonstrate how it records and monitors specific data for incident reports with complex scenarios not covered in the standard DfE incident reports, and consequently obtained an 'Outstanding' report rating.

The school realised the capability of SIMS by using assessment data for the purpose of tracking, and was able to create customised timetables to facilitate specialist subjects and curriculum.

Since the migration, SBS has earned accreditation as a SIMS support partner from Capita, and the school has maintained a Service Desk contract along with on-site visits to ensure things continue to run smoothly.

Clare further added, "We felt supported through the whole change by a knowledgeable team who were extremely flexible in adapting to our demands, which were necessarily changing as the process unfolded and more understanding of the various applications was being gained."

Next steps

Following the well-executed project plan migrating the MIS system, the school felt confident SBS would be able to maintain the same quality delivery to review the finance software. The Business Manager requested information and pricing for FMS and SBS created a project plan for the school.

Swiss Cottage is considering further improved financial reporting using SBS Online budget planning and monitoring software.

To find out more about MIS Support, contact the SBS team on 0345 222 1551 or email sales@schoolbusinessservices.co.uk

www.schoolbusinessservices.co.uk