

SBS Online empowers SBM with renewed budgeting confidence



School Profile

Name

Lady Jane Grey Primary School

School Category

Academy

School type

Primary

Pupil roll

224

Age range of pupils

4 to 11

LA

Leicester

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Sally Boaden

School Business Manager

Lady Jane Grey is a successful primary academy in Groby near Leicester.

For its last Ofsted inspection in February 2015 it was awarded ‘Outstanding School’ status.

Before switching to SBS Online, School Business Manager, Sally Boaden, utilised spreadsheets provided by the local authority. The spreadsheets had always calculated each contract’s National Insurance separately.

“For members of staff who had more than one role, the forecasts were always wrong,” Sally explained. “For example, a single member of staff worked as a teaching assistant, in the breakfast club, as a midday meal supervisor and as a cover supervisor. Their NI was always miles out.” This was also the case for many other staff at the school and it was presenting a major budgeting problem.

Working with spreadsheets also posed other problems. “If I wanted to change my staffing I had to add a new line on the salary spreadsheet which would then throw out my budgeting spreadsheet. I had little faith in my budgets and I often felt like a fool in meetings with governors because my figures would often change from one meeting to the next.”

Sally took the decision not to continue with the LA’s finance support which meant that her spreadsheets subsequently became out of date. This compounded her staffing forecast issues.

She used her MIS and finance software instead to create salary forecasts but admits that these were not satisfactory either. “For a school this size it meant a grey area of around £5K of unknown costs per year that weren’t properly budgeted for.”

It was clear that Sally needed a budgeting solution which worked for her. Having seen a demonstration of SBS Online at her regional SBM meeting, Sally invited SBS to present the software to her SBM group in Leicester. The group soon decided to acquire the software. From Sally’s point of view, it would help her remove this grey area from her budgeting process.

System setup & training

The first stage was for the SBS Online team to import all of the school’s chart of accounts, staff contracts and non-staffing income and expenditure. “*This was a seamless process. It was quick and easy to provide the data needed and SBS did all the setting up in time for training.*”

Sally and several other SBMs from the local area who had also opted to use SBS Online, requested group training. This took the form of a one-day intensive session with one of the schools hosting the day. The group environment allowed for lots of questions and sharing of ideas.

“Our trainer, Jeff, was very patient in dealing with the group and the questions we asked. It was good to be able to hear lots of different queries. Not all of the SBMs in the group had been keen to make the jump to a new system. They all had processes in place which in some cases had been used for years. But the training went well.”

“Having accurate staffing forecasts has allowed me to budget better for a brand new kitchen and an after school club.”

Sally Boaden
 School Business Manager



After-care

SBS followed up the training with regular contact to ensure that Sally and the other schools were happy with the way their planners had been set up and to answer any ongoing questions. They all had, and continue to have, unlimited access to the Service Desk as part of their subscription.

“Since training, the Service Desk has been very useful. They have the time for you to deal with your problem and are not patronising as they talk you through your query.” The group of SBMs has also met since starting to use SBS Online to share best practice.

Impact

Sally is now hugely more confident in the numbers SBS Online is projecting for her staffing costs. This is largely due to the way that NI is calculated. It is worked out by employee, not by contract, and for those staff who have more than one role, the NI calculations are spread across those contracts to arrive at exactly the right figure.

“I have 99.99% confidence in SBS Online, especially with regard to the staffing which makes up such a large part of my expenditure.”

She also uses the salary monitor to check her payroll and ensure her contracts remain correct at the same time. “The salary monitor takes me 20 minutes instead of an hour and a half. I know we are a small school but another in the group is a large secondary and the salary monitoring is saving the SBM there hours and hours of work.”

With her renewed faith in her staffing figures, Sally has been able to budget more creatively and more freely. “Having accurate staffing forecasts has allowed me to budget better for a brand new kitchen and an after school club.”

Next steps

Going forward, Sally will be setting up her 2015/16 budget which will project income and expenditure out to five years, and she will be refining the budget figures to produce more accurate reports. She will also be using SBS Online’s unique tagging system to analyse specific areas of the budget that will help her track the income and expenditure for new projects like the after school club.

Summary

SBS Online has removed the doubt from Lady Jane Grey School’s budget and has provided its SBM with a renewed sense of confidence and purpose. Not only are her staffing forecasts correct, but the software will help the school stay in the black and will provide opportunities for completely new projects which were not necessarily possible before.

The business manager is looking forward to improved reporting to governors using more of the system features, such as a custom reporting format and the use of analysis tags to show plans for specific ring-fenced funds.

To find out more about SBS Online, contact the team on **0345 222 1551 • Option 5** or email sales@schoolbusinessservices.co.uk

www.schoolbusinessservices.co.uk