

ST. JOHN'S CE (C) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Summary

St John's Primary School used to record children's daily attendance and school meal requirements using a paper form. Money was collected in the classroom and taken to the school office for counting. To reduce the administrative workload, St. John's decided to look for a cashless catering system.

By implementing Gladstone Education's OnRecord Primary solution, the school has automated the daily meal requirements count, provided a revaluation unit for self-service cash payments, and also implemented the daily classroom registration process using electronic whiteboards. This has saved many hours of administration time per week and also fully meets government requirements for timely registration reporting.

Solution

- OnRecord Primary
- Revaluation unit
- Biometric Reader

Gladstone Professional Services

- System installation
- Training services
- Support services

Benefits

- Cashless catering with revaluation unit and biometric reader
- Cost-effective electronic registration using electronic whiteboards
- Minimal office administration with real-time management reporting

"Gladstone Education's OnRecord Primary solution has totally revolutionised the way we register our children's attendance and handle their school meal requirements. It has significantly reduced the workload for teachers and office staff while providing seamless integration with our management information system"

Mrs Janet Chetter
Office Manager
St. John's Primary School

Save time at registration by letting pupils do the work!

When St. John's Primary School wanted to streamline money handling and daily booking for school meals, the school initially looked at several cashless catering systems. But by installing Gladstone Education's OnRecord Primary solution, St John's has gone much further. As well as supporting cashless catering to save administration time, Gladstone's OnRecord has provided the school with a cost-effective electronic solution for recording attendance.



The school's dilemma

St. John's Primary is a Church of England school in Essington, near Wolverhampton. The school has 456 children which is significantly more than most primary schools. Drawing pupils from a wide catchment area, the school was generally rated as "outstanding" in a 2006 Ofsted inspection.

Like many such schools, St. John's relies on Capita's SIMS management information system (MIS) to support key functions such as managing pupil attendance and keeping financial accounts. For Office Manager Mrs Janet Chetter, the SIMS system had never sat easily alongside the daily paperwork for meal numbers, collecting payments and pupil registration requirements.

The challenge

"The dinner register was manual and we had to input all the information for the money collected too," says Mrs Chetter.

The whole process was driven from printed daily attendance register sheets which also included space to record which children wanted to have a school meal. The sheets used optical mark recognition and were scanned by a reader linked to the MIS. However, meal numbers were tallied manually before informing the kitchen and reconciling the money collected against each child's account.

Cashless Catering – a smoother process

The school decided to look for a better way to record meal choices, collect payments and end concerns about money moving between classes and the office.

"We invited several companies in and spoke to other schools that used cashless catering," says Mrs Chetter. "Gladstone listened very carefully to us and, although we were just looking for a cashless catering system, Gladstone explained that OnRecord Primary would do attendance at the same time. That seemed a bonus."

One system saving time and money

OnRecord Primary takes the core functionality of electronic registration (OnRecord e-registration) and adds key features from the Gladstone OnRecord cashless catering system (OnRecord Cashless). For St John's this meant that one system would support cashless catering, automate the daily meal count, and even monitor children receiving meal choices. OnRecord also provided electronic registration in the classroom and integrated seamlessly with a link to the school's MIS. Overall, it promised to save considerable time.

The new system went live in Autumn 2006 after Gladstone installed the OnRecord Primary software and provided comprehensive training. A card-based revaluation unit was also installed in the entrance foyer with a biometric (fingerprint) reader in the dining hall. This reads the fingerprints (just a numerical value is stored, not the fingerprint itself) of the children in years 3 to 6, noting who has (or hasn't) taken their chosen meal. The system then debits the child's account. The system is also linked to the school's MIS, with full remote software support and on-site hardware support provided.

The same self-service revaluation unit, also reads Smart cards issued to the parents enabling them to top-up their child's account. This has also made a big difference by reducing money handling and manual accounting allowing OnRecord Primary to record the cash credited to accounts automatically. However, the system does permit meals to be taken if the account is temporarily overdrawn.

The school's existing interactive whiteboards in each classroom now drive pupil registration and meal choices - no paperwork is required. This allows teachers (or children in some classes) to register and choose a meal by simply touching the screen.

A single management information solution

By adding all of these functions together, paperwork has been replaced by a solution that provides instant information. Not only does this ensure an accurate daily school-wide count of meal requirements (average 120) and a reduction in food waste in the kitchen, but absences are closely tracked too. OnRecord Primary has proved ideal for meeting statutory reporting requirements and will help with the 2012 deadline for online attendance reporting to parents.

"Gladstone's OnRecord Primary solution instantly updates all the attendances in the management information system. We don't have to do anything as it's all done automatically," says Mrs Chetter.

Mrs Chetter now finds it easier to answer parents' queries using a comprehensive reporting suite. This is in line with the government's target to have online reporting in secondary schools by September 2010 and primary schools by September 2012. "The Gladstone system shows us how much money is outstanding. If there's any discrepancy, we just do a print-out and it tells the parents when their children had meals, as well as when and how any money was paid in."

The future

In the two years since installing the Gladstone solution, three major time-saving benefits for OnRecord Primary have become apparent. Firstly, the self-service revaluation unit cuts down on cash handling; secondly, the office can print individual meal account histories; and, finally, the novel way of handling classroom registration by using interactive whiteboards ends attendance paperwork. According to Mrs Chetter this has released "many hours" of staff time per week.

"OnRecord Primary is doing everything we want and Gladstone has been very helpful. If there's anything we need, we just ask," says Mrs Chetter.



Revaluation unit

A revaluation unit is a self-service machine for pupils or parents to deposit money to pay for school meals. Wall-mounted in a steel cabinet, the unit features a card or biometric reader for user identification. Money may be paid in as notes or coins. As the revaluation unit is directly linked to the OnRecord Cashless and OnRecord Primary solutions, meal account balances are immediately updated.



For information on the
OnRecord solution suite

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