

C A S E S T U D Y



St. Clare's, Oxford
— An International Education —

Summary

St. Clare's in Oxford wanted to replace their old cashless catering system with a new solution offering much tighter control over individual meal entitlements. Gladstone Education's OnRecord Cashless was chosen, data integration set up by Gladstone consultants with the school's management information system (MIS), and proximity cards issued.

OnRecord Cashless now controls the daily use of meal entitlements, allowing set amounts to be spent for different meals according to the time of day. The proximity cards are also used by St. Clare's access control system and, printed with a barcode for use with the library system.

Benefits

- Seamless integration with MIS
- Multiple-use proximity card - meals, access control and library privileges
- Control of meal entitlement spending by time of day

"Gladstone Education's OnRecord Cashless system is very straightforward to operate and a perfect fit with our school. Thanks to such good integration between our MIS and OnRecord, we now automatically ensure that student and staff meal entitlements are used correctly throughout the day."

John Boschen, IT Manager
St. Clare's, Oxford

St. Clare's in Oxford used to have difficulty in managing daily meal entitlements, but since implementing Gladstone Education's OnRecord Cashless solution this is a thing of the past and they now enjoy far better control. The new catering system seamlessly integrates with the school's management information system (MIS), controls meal spending by students and staff, and its MIFARE™ proximity card technology can be used with other applications.

Founded in 1953, St. Clare's is a co-educational, international, day and boarding college. The college is divided into two campuses, with 265 students preparing for the International Baccalaureate Diploma on one campus and 130 adult students attending Liberal Arts courses, a University Foundation year and English language courses on the adult campus. During the summer vacation over 1,500 foreign students come to St. Clare's to take part in a range of short summer courses.

Before implementing OnRecord Cashless, St. Clare's used a less reliable cashless catering system. This system used swipe cards to limit daily meal entitlements, but, critically, could not control the money spent at individual mealtimes.



"We had to re-input data from the MIS into the catering management system. It also didn't give us the fine control we needed over entitlements," says John Boschen, the IT Manager at St. Clare's.

Student fees at St. Clare's include a daily allowance for meals and staff are given food allowances when working. Although the previous cashless system had eliminated cash, it could not cope with part-time teachers working on different days or prevent students spending too much on snacks.

Mr Boschen felt that having two SQL databases – one in the existing MIS and the second in a new cashless catering system - would help. The meal entitlements could then be extracted from the MIS database and uploaded to the catering system. This would allow St. Clare's to control spending by mealtime and by day.

Cost-effective

The school shortlisted several systems including Gladstone Education's OnRecord Cashless catering system, which uses a Microsoft SQL Server database. Gladstone Education impressed him from the outset as the OnRecord suite seemed very easy to set up. The system produces comprehensive management reports and uses MIFARE™ proximity smart cards. This is ideal for integrating with the school's access control security system which covers all of its 27 sites. Not only that, OnRecord is based on the .Net Framework and is deployed via a web-based interface.

"Gladstone Education gave us the most complete and competent demonstration - the presenter's level of knowledge was excellent," says Mr Boschen. "OnRecord Cashless was straightforward to operate and I immediately realised we'd be able to achieve a good level of integration based on the technology platform and their innovative approach to business."

OnRecord was implemented at St. Clare's Bardwell Road centre in December 2006 and, the following month, was introduced in the dining hall and café at the school's main site on Banbury Road. Gladstone Education's consultants provided project management services, installed the OnRecord software and Electronic Point of Sale (EPoS) tills.

"The installation was handled very well. Gladstone Education had a good understanding of their system and were able to do all the integration work for us. What we were trying to do was fairly complicated but it was done very easily thanks to Gladstone's consultants," says Mr Boschen.

The MIFARE™ proximity smart cards, also provided by Gladstone Education, were printed with the student's name, photograph, and library barcode. Full training was given to the catering and administration staff on the new system and to administrative staff in using the OnRecord software. Gladstone Education also provided software and hardware support but this, says Mr Boschen, has not been needed much given the intuitive and user-friendly nature of the whole solution.

Fine control

With OnRecord in place, St Clare's can now set daily meal entitlement limits within the system for each student or groups of students. Likewise, staff have allowances according to their working patterns including 'overdrafts' when working on different days of the week. A Gladstone interface is utilised to integrate seamlessly with the school's MIS and shares data between the systems on a daily basis.

OnRecord Cashless is configured to spread these daily spending limits throughout the day – there is a £3.20 limit for breakfast and £6.40 each for lunch and an evening meal. This gives St. Clare's complete control in terms of what students or staff can do with their meal entitlements. Speed of till service has also improved, thanks to the reliable nature of the card-based system.

"OnRecord Cashless is now configured so that a student can only spend their allowance at certain times of the day," says Mr Boschen. "Because there is such good integration between our MIS system and OnRecord, we can enforce that policy with minimal effort."

Another key benefit is that the new proximity cards support multiple uses. The MIFARE™ RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) chip contains the unique identification number read by the Gladstone system. The same card technology also stores details of individual access privileges for St Clare's access control system while the printed barcode is used by the library system.

"OnRecord Cashless has fulfilled all of our requirements and it fits perfectly with the way our business works," says Mr Boschen.

The biggest test for OnRecord (and for St Clare's administrators) comes every summer when there is an intake of 1,500 English language students. Each one has a meal entitlement and is given a printed proximity card for meals, door access, and library privileges. This is a big task which used to cause headaches for the school. However, thanks to the automatic interface between St Clare's MIS and OnRecord, the process now takes far less effort.



For information on the
OnRecord solution suite

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