DIXONS ACADEMIES TRUST
FINDING A STRATEGIC PARTNER TO SUPPORT FUTURE GROWTH

OVERVIEW

Dixons Academy Trust is a well-established multi-academy trust of 12 schools serving the communities of Bradford and Leeds. These consist of 6 secondary academies, 3 primaries, 2 all-through academies and a sixth form academy. The Trust's mission is to challenge social and educational disadvantage in the North, through establishing high performing establishments which maximise student achievement, value diversity, develop character and build cultural capital. The Trust ensures that Dixon's students have high aspirations and a collective ambition that brings about success. We spoke to Neil Miley, Executive Principal for the Trust to provide insight into the need to change their Management Information System (MIS).

"It is also a cost-effective solution as you do not have to invest money into purchasing physical servers in-house and it eliminates the need to maintain the on-site servers, saving time and money associated with managing complex systems."

NEIL MILEY
EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL

Bromcom

THE PROBLEM

There comes a time when one system needs to be analysed to see if it is still enhancing the provision it had once set out to do. Capita SIMS had provided a service to the schools for many years. However, with the changing face and demands of education; the Trust needed a superior MIS to meet their needs.

Neil explained that the functionality and development to ensure the very best education is taught within the schools, requires an up-to-date system that can work efficiently and effectively to enable staff to deliver the curriculum at the highest level. Their previous system could not keep up with the demands from the sector.

"The opinion across the Trust was that their MIS lacked the functionality they desired ... When upgrades were made to the system to provide additional functionality, we would often find the system could not cope and would cause several faults. It was unable to interact with other schools within the trust.

NEIL MILEY
EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL

This lack of reliability would mean there were fewer updates. Previously efficient processes had become out of date and no longer useful within a modern-day school. To not have the system available for vital information and data was unacceptable. The locally hosted servers that had in the past provided a secure backup for their data, were now weakening the system performance. With the advances in cloud technology, it makes sense that more and more schools are moving to a cloud-based solution.

It was not only the lack of innovation that caused Dixons to source their MIS from elsewhere, but also a lack of interaction between different schools within the Trust. To be a successful MAT there is a need to develop strong communication and analysis.

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A Trust is a community, and the legacy MIS provider was creating isolated silos.

The amalgamation of data is an important task to ensure the right resources have been distributed across the Trust. As a centralised team, there is a need for the oversight and transparency of each school. Unfortunately, the legacy MIS could not provide this, creating a heavy administrative burden for the staff.

Due to this manual workaround, these steps could cause the integrity of the data to be compromised. Neil had expressed how the lack of flexibility when trying to view data and performance from a Trust level was a huge frustration and therefore caused unnecessary workload to staff who could spend their time focusing on the other priorities.

Not only was there a lack of interoperability with assessment and other demographic data, but the Trust could also not centralise functionality easily. To identify strengths and weaknesses within a Trust, there needs to be a 'backbone' of standards and alignment to key principles. For a Trust, this key message needed to exist within the MIS system. Once again, the previous MIS could not fulfil their ambitions.

Neil felt it was extremely important to move towards a new solution that would meet the needs of the Trust as it develops and expands across the country. They wanted a strategic partner that would support them through the next phase of their growth.

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THE SOLUTION

Bromcom was the chosen provider to enable the Dixons Academies Trust to develop their own bespoke systems to meet the needs of their children. Bromcom is an experienced MIS provider and has developed substantial support for MATs. Neil explained that Bromcom had embraced MATs and provided a solution that their legacy MIS was unable to deliver. The greatest impact was the ability to use the system anywhere and at any time. Enabling staff to contribute to the planning and assessment of lessons.

MAT Vision provided Neil with a solution that enabled interaction of data across the Trust. The centralisation of functionality created a path for the standardisation of roles, permissions, and routines across the trust. This is something the Trust relies upon to ensure that each individual academy operates with alignment and autonomy. With this approach, effective support can be provided from the centralised team.

Bromcom's system is highly resilient. By utilising cloud technology and multiple failsafe mechanisms, their data is safe and always online. Too often in the past, the previous MIS would have provided downtime during updates and in turn a lack of productivity. Neil explained that there's no more downtime thanks to Bromcom, so schools don't have to work around issues and can simply focus on supporting the different academies.

As well as the increase in functionality and a better user experience, the pricing of the Bromcom MIS system appealed to the Trust leaders. One major benefit was the huge reduction in manual administration, freeing up staff time to spend on developing the teaching and learning.

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Additional costs from third-party add-ons have significantly reduced thanks to the use of integrated functionality.

There's no need to procure and maintain MIS servers, saving time and money associated with managing complex systems. Cloud-based software also provides peace of mind and security. The data is moved around and manipulated within one secure platform, which is far more efficient than being manually extracted and inserted into multiple third-party systems.

The relationship between Dixons Academies Trust and Bromcom has only just begun.

More and more schools from the Trust are migrating their way over to Bromcom, strengthening the facilities and opportunities available to the central team.

Even though there have been 'big changes' within the Trust, Neil noted he was pleased with the progress and development of the technology they are beginning to use. Bromcom is supporting Dixons to create a variety of bespoke systems that meet the needs of the students, staff, and leaders. Neil is looking forward to the next adventure using the Power Bi integration within Bromcom.

"The best feature of the Bromcom system is that it is cloud-based. We can gain access to the data anytime, anywhere through any device with a standard browser. The cloud-based system also allows the user to easily share, analyse and aggregate data across schools through better integration and standardisation."

NEIL MILEY
EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL

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GET IN TOUCH TO SEE HOW WE COULD HELP YOUR SCHOOL OR MAT

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Bromcom Cloud-MIS Case Study

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