Aspire Academy Trust - quick and reliable implementation of dozens of schools at once

Aspire is a sizeable trust in Cornwall, with 31 primaries split across five local hubs. They went to tender in 2018 as their SIMS licences were coming to an end.

The geography of Cornwall made it vital that Aspire have a cloud-based MIS with a central view of all their schools. It also made usability key, so a lot of travel wouldn't be required for in-person training and assistance. Both primary and secondary functionality was included in the tender, to future proof the contract in case of secondaries joining the trust. Arbor was chosen to provide an excellent solution and full suite of features for all levels of governance.

**31 primaries
5 local hubs**

Migration journey

May 2018: Three of the academies, Indian Queens, Bude Juniors, and Bude Infants, move to Arbor to trial the benefits of a cloud based MIS solution.

Sep 2018: The full trust goes to tender to decide on a unified MIS solution for all schools, and chooses Arbor for its comprehensive functionality, superior usability, and high quality service offering during implementation.

Jan 2019: All schools go live on Arbor MIS in advance of their SIMS licences ending, starting on Arbor Core whilst the pioneer schools, Indian Queens and Bude, test the more advanced parental engagement features in Arbor Comms. A strong train-the-trainer model is implemented where more experienced schools and the trust 'Arbor Champion', Peter Bradburn, helped onboard new schools and carry out their own internal training.

Summer Term 2019: Further schools move to the trust and onto Arbor. Bude Infants and Juniors test out the Arbor App for parents so it can be rolled out to all schools, and then upgrade to Arbor Perform.

Sep 2019: All remaining schools move to Arbor Comms in order to roll out the Arbor App and parental engagement tools. Bude Infants and Juniors and other pioneer schools begin testing the full suite of features in Arbor Perform including curriculum tracking.

2020: Further schools are expected to join the trust, and further schools within the trust are expected to move to Arbor Perform as contracts for third party softwares expire.

Arbor's impact in the trust, as told by IT Director, Peter Bradburn

Why did you decide to switch to Arbor?

"We were looking for a more modern MIS that suited the needs of us as a modern organisation. We went through the tender process and found that Arbor was the best solution for those needs - it's intuitive and easy-to-use - and it gives the people in our trust back the ownership over the data that they need. Now, we can easily access key bits of data in a few clicks, whereas before, we had to ask someone to run a report to get this information (and I'm talking bog standard bits of information about pupils that should have been easy to access, but that historically was tied up in other systems!)"

Which parts of Arbor have saved you the most time?

"We think the MAT dashboard is very good - being able to access data about all our schools from one system has saved us a lot of time and has enabled us to set up smarter workflows by automating processes that used to take time (specifically around attendance, reports, and gathering data). Something we are now able to do much more easily is gathering data about the pupil premium children across the trust and easily analyse that data.

We also love Arbor's live feeds. Having a live reporting function allows us to creatively grab and manipulate data so that we can get exactly what we want out of it - we're much less restricted than we used to be when we were using SIMS. With our last system, you would run a report, and the results you'd get would be out of the box and not customisable - SIMS only let you go so far with reporting. Live feed enables you to put data into Excel in real time and manipulate the data in the way that you like. We're now working on exporting real time attendance data into a tracker - we're not quite there yet, but we're on the way to perfecting the process.

With Arbor, we're now able to take a workflow, rethink it, automate it, and make it as efficient as possible in terms of the time we save. It's a journey, but we're really glad that we embarked on that journey as it's made a real difference to us and all our schools.

Ultimately, we've found that Arbor allows us as a trust to give ownership of data back to the people in the schools that should have it. Before, we used to have to rely heavily on data managers and other members of staff to get what we needed, but now we don't have to do that. All we need to do is press a couple of buttons and there's the data! I'd say that Arbor makes it easy for people regardless of their role within the school or trust to access the data that they need. Finally, because it's cloud-based, people can access all the information they need from different places, which is really valuable as a trust with schools spread across a certain area."

How satisfied are you with the people and service you've received?

"You get the feeling with Arbor that you all clearly want us to be getting the best from the system. From start to finish, conversations we've had with everyone, whether it was the people that started the project with us, account managers or frontline support, have made us feel like Arbor understands the needs of our organisation. You're flexible in order to help us get the best from the system. Moving MIS as a trust wasn't a decision to be taken lightly, but we're really pleased with the process and the outcome."

Arbor