

# Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust

“Helping every child achieve their God-given potential”

## Overview

The Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust (‘DCAT’) was established in 2014 and has been a client of Strictly Education’s (SE) since 2017 when the trust centrally procured a single payroll solution for its schools. The trust now has 16 academies and an aspiration for further schools to join the trust.

Students

**4,927**

Location

SOUTH COAST

Staff

**706**



## The challenge

DCAT is an ambitious and growing multi-academy trust, eager to achieve their strategic plan and future-proof the trust. As more schools joined the trust, they knew they would need an all-encompassing single HR and payroll system to manage their expanding workforce more effectively. In March 2021, the trust went out to tender and identified the following requirements:

- Manage their expanding workforce
- Have a single view of the entire workforce
- Standardise HR practice across the trust
- Gain efficiencies through removal of data duplication
- Improve reporting to trustees
- Provide more accurate data to inform strategic decision making

DCAT wanted a partner that understood the education sector and other systems used by schools and trusts. Already working with Strictly Education since 2017, we provided a full payroll, pensions and HR admin service to the trust and had an excellent understanding of their requirements. DCAT felt comfortable talking to SE about their new HR and payroll system – EduPeople and how it could help them achieve greater efficiency and save time and money.

**“**We chose to partner with Strictly Education as our values are aligned and they totally understand the intricacies of education payroll and HR because they only work with schools and academy trusts.**”**

Former Head of Finance



Having a dedicated account manager from the off who really understands what our needs are, has been fundamental to the success of the payroll implementation – if I have a query, I know it will get resolved quickly – Yvonne has made all the difference.

**Former Head of Finance**



## The response

Strictly Education was successful in retaining the trust as a client. The EduPeople solution that we proposed provides all the functionality as laid out within their specification but at a price point affordable to larger MATs, having invested nearly £2m in developing the system specifically for the education sector, and in particular to meet the requirements of growing MATs.

We proposed a three-stage transition onto the new system which would enable staff to become confident users and make the most of the rich HR functionality EduPeople has to offer. This was managed through a named senior level project manager and supported by a team of subject matter experts in payroll, pensions and HR.

A kick off meeting with the Chief Executive and senior leadership team, ensured key stakeholder engagement from the outset. A bespoke plan was agreed to support the demands of the data gathering phase, the training requirements of the trust and we deployed our expertise to support their own internal communications plan, which included helpful ‘user guides’ for school staff and business managers.

**Stage one** of the transition has focused on the migration of DCAT’s current payroll system to EduPeople Core. During the implementation phase, our plan would normally involve two parallel runs, to ensure data accuracy and an accurate payroll. It was agreed with DCAT to undertake a third and parallel run, alongside multiple staff training sessions at no additional expense to the client. This approach ensured there were no pay inaccuracies, data matched and very importantly – that staff were confident using the system before going ‘live’. This demonstrates how working closely with the client, at a pace which suited them, achieved greater “buy-in” from their staff and helped to increase user confidence levels.

The introduction of Employee Self Service (ESS) functionality which followed, enabled employees for the first time to view their HR information including payslips, P45, P60 and personal details at a time that suits them. Staff have found ESS intuitive and easy to use, assisted by a helpful user guide and training sessions.

## The response (continued)

**Stage Two – Journey to Premium** Is currently in progress and DCAT are gradually rolling out new HR admin functionality in EduPeople Premium at a pace that they are comfortable with; this includes Absence Management & Reporting, Contracts Administration, Manager Self Service – authorisation of overtime, expenses, absence and holidays, Single Central Record and pre-employment checks, and Case Management. Full ‘How to’ training is provided across all modules, enabling staff to use the rich HR functionality effectively.

One of DCAT’s requirements was to standardise HR practices across the trust. Now that all employee

information is held in one place, we have helped them standardise, align, and formalise all employee contracts which are being rolled out to all staff using the contracts administration module. Once DCAT integrate the Recruitment & Onboarding module during stage three, this will future proof the management of contracts for new starters.

**Stage Three** Involves the opportunity for DCAT to adopt EduPeople’s talent management Platinum modules which will considerably help the trust as it grows with Staff Performance Management, Recruitment & Onboarding and Learning & Development.

“ We are really looking forward to being able to get more insights, information and reporting. ”

Former Head of Finance

### Stage 1

EduPeople Core – Live

### Stage 2

EduPeople Premium – In progress

### Stage 3

EduPeople Platinum – Planned

## The result

Stage One has now been completed, meaning DCAT now has real time information and accurate data, so they know what their staff are being paid now, not what they were being paid at the end of last month. Everyone got paid on the first pay day successfully and there have been four further payrolls since, with no major issues.

The former Head of Finance said, “Lucy our Payroll Officer was fantastic at ironing out idiosyncrasies and correcting errors that came up at trust and school level.”

SE’s Head of Implementation joins a weekly meeting with the DCAT leads for Finance and HR which has helped ensure a smooth ongoing monthly payroll.

DCAT recognises the importance of having this support post ‘going live’, something we offer that adds real value and that you won’t necessarily get from all HR and Payroll providers.

DCAT also felt that the ongoing support and engagement helped significantly with the implementation of ESS and the further rollout of the Premium HR admin modules. Both the central trust team followed by schools in the trust have adopted the new HR admin functionality gradually, and at their own pace – giving them confidence to use the system effectively and over time ultimately helping them to gain efficiencies, through non-duplication of data entry.

## The verdict

Although DCAT is only part way through their transition, they are starting to see how EduPeople is helping them to manage their people more effectively and giving them a single view of their entire workforce through better reporting, automation and employee self-service. The MAT wide view enabled by EduPeople means they have been able to more easily centralise some tasks carried out at academy level.

The former Head of Finance said, "Once school staff had become proficient users of the new payroll

system and employee self-service, they were keen to start using the HR Admin functionality as they could see it was going to make their lives easier and simplify processes for them."

The trust is using EduPeople as a key enabler to their own transformation as they seek to systemise and standardise HR practice across the trust.



Working with 900 academies and 180 MATs for many years, Strictly Education has the knowledge and expertise in all corners of a well-run multi-academy trust. EduPeople offers the best of both worlds, it is based in the cloud but comes with a team of CIPP

qualified experts on the ground. From recruitment to retirement, one single system manages your HR, payroll and pensions together, saving time on people management and providing support at every stage of the employee life cycle.



We build and sustain excellent relationships



We value people and their differences



We are trusted to deliver great services



We continuously challenge ourselves to improve our services



We work hard to protect reputations



We strive to deliver excellent services

**Get in touch:**

0330 123 2549 / [edupeople@strictlyeducation.co.uk](mailto:edupeople@strictlyeducation.co.uk)



You educate, we support