



case study

Improving school improvement in London with *schoolcentre.net*

Since its launch in 2004, an increasing number of London schools have opted to manage their school improvement planning with *schoolcentre.net*, an online self-evaluation, evidence gathering and school improvement tool. This case study takes a closer look at the experiences of two schools – Engayne Primary School in Havering and Holy Trinity CE Primary in Barnet.

fact file

Engayne Primary is a very large mixed community school with 590 pupils on roll. It is one of 85 schools in the London Borough of Havering. **Holy Trinity CE Primary** is situated in Barnet and is a mixed voluntary aided school with 217 pupils.

The Skills Factory aims to relieve the administrative burden on school management teams and teachers. Its most popular resource is *schoolcentre.net* – an online self-evaluation, evidence gathering and school improvement tool. The company is part of the Granada Learning Group.

case study

“schoolcentre.net is a resource that offers reliability and a ‘one-stop solution’ for self-evaluation and school improvement planning. It is an excellent tool that would certainly benefit other schools.”

Suzanne Ship, Head Teacher,
Engayne Primary

Engayne Primary, Havering

Engayne Primary was one of the first schools in London to adopt *schoolcentre.net* in 2004. At the time, the self-evaluation process was a new dimension to school improvement and the school management team were looking for a tool that would pull the two functions together. As Suzanne Ship, Head Teacher, explains: “We were looking for something that would embed self-evaluation firmly into the school improvement process and *schoolcentre.net* has done exactly that. Not only that, it allows all stakeholders central-access and the ability to continually update evolving plans over the Internet at any time. It has become a central store for our Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) and all other associated documents, keeping them in an electronic format and making them easily accessible to all.”

This view is shared by Dave Smith, Engayne’s Leader for School Improvement Through ICT: “*schoolcentre.net* has really changed the way we manage our SEF and school improvement planning. The SEF is no longer a document held by the senior management team and imposed on the staff. In contrast, it has become a very open process which *schoolcentre.net* helps to facilitate through the ease by which aspects can be updated without the need to print off reams of paper. In fact, school improvement and SEF processes at Engayne are now generally paperless.”

When asked about how *schoolcentre.net* was implemented into everyday use at Engayne Primary, Dave describes it as “an astonishingly quick process” and continues: “We held a staff meeting at which *schoolcentre.net* was shared with all staff.

Individual training was then provided to enable staff to input their individual action plans and they were up-and-running in around 20 minutes! The SEF was then transferred into the software and is regularly updated by the senior management team and whole-staff. Staff soon found *schoolcentre.net* to be a useful tool to support the school improvement planning process and they quickly got to grips with using it. It is now firmly embedded into practice at Engayne and action plans are shared and reviewed at staff meetings using the staffroom data projector. In this way, a two-way SEF feedback process has become firmly established and I know that if we stopped using *schoolcentre.net* now, the staff would be far from happy!”

Dave feels that communication with governors has also improved: “Termly reports are distributed to governors via *schoolcentre.net* and they can log in at any time to view the ongoing process of school improvement and self-evaluation. Monitoring of action planning is now much simpler, as no longer do folders of evidence have to be collected in – it is all there at the click of a button!”

Engayne Primary was inspected by Ofsted in November 2007 with many aspects, including the effectiveness of the school’s self-evaluation, graded as ‘Outstanding’. Suzanne Ship felt that *schoolcentre.net* was an excellent aid in the preparation: “We set up an Ofsted Inspector guest account in *schoolcentre.net* so that the inspectors could access the SEF and Action Plans even before they set foot across the school’s threshold, providing additional information and more time to state our case. We even uploaded a folder of documents useful to the inspection process.”

In fact, many of the points touched upon in this case study were echoed in the reporting inspector’s feedback: “Leadership is very inclusive and all staff are involved in school improvement and monitoring standards, teaching and learning. There is an outstanding understanding of the school’s strengths and areas for improvement, so that any weaknesses are swiftly addressed. Governors are fully involved in school improvement and monitoring.”

Holy Trinity CE Primary, Barnet

Tim Bowden is the head teacher of Holy Trinity CE Primary in Barnet. He first used *schoolcentre.net* as a deputy head teacher

at his previous school and it was one of the first tools he introduced after being appointed head teacher at Holy Trinity. “At Merryhills, my old school, I had witnessed the considerable amount of time *schoolcentre.net* saved us by its ability to link the SEF and SIP and attach evidence to both. So when I moved to Holy Trinity, I didn’t think twice about implementing it there too.”

Tim feels that *schoolcentre.net*’s main strength lies in the way it enables interaction: “In many schools, a school improvement plan is often something that the head spends hours and hours producing and then, it’s not actually used a great deal. *schoolcentre.net* changes that by enabling a flexible approach to school improvement across the entire school community. This is achieved by the simple fact that it is an online tool so it can be accessed anywhere by any stakeholder with the appropriate privileges. And this in turn means that interaction is much more evident and ongoing. In the same way that assessment is for learning, *schoolcentre.net* is a tool ‘for’ school improvement rather than ‘of’.”

Like Engayne Primary, Holy Trinity has also undergone an Ofsted inspection since its adoption of *schoolcentre.net* and Tim feels the software played a very important role in the preparation: “After being given notice of the very unexpected inspection, I was easily able to communicate with my school improvement advisor via *schoolcentre.net* to sharpen the school improvement plan with success criteria. It also meant that our SEF and SIP dovetailed naturally together and we had proof at our fingertips that actions were being taken. It is a truly organic tool and I really feel that I couldn’t run the school without it.”

December 2007**Benefits:**

- Provides direct links between SEF and School Improvement Plan
- Stores all documents and evidence in one, secure place
- Ensures a school is in a continual state of readiness for an Ofsted inspection
- Can be accessed by entire school community
- Uploads SEF directly to Ofsted website

contacts

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