

# Special schools drive whole school improvement with schoolcentre.net



## case study

**Meeting the learning needs of children who attend special schools can be a challenging task as students often have a wide range of complex requirements. For two headteachers, using The Skills Factory’s *schoolcentre.net* online self-evaluation tool is helping them to manage the school improvement process efficiently and ensure they can demonstrate that every child is getting the support they need.**

Brookfields Specialist SEN School in Tilehurst, Reading, has an excellent reputation for delivering high-quality education. The school’s 185 students have a range of learning difficulties and additional needs and many have profound and multiple educational issues. *schoolcentre.net* was introduced by the leadership team in July 2008 to help ensure teachers, support staff, therapists and governors could work together to play a prominent role in driving whole school improvement.

“As a SEN specialist school, it is vital that we can closely monitor progress towards all our school improvement goals, which include our specialist status targets,” says Deputy Headteacher, Brandon Mills.

“Using *schoolcentre.net*, we can seamlessly link our self-evaluation form to the school improvement plan online. This ensures current copies of these important documents are always easily accessible to staff members and governors, whether they are working inside or outside school. Having an online school improvement system helps all staff to clearly see how their role contributes to achieving our vision and the future development of the school.”

Previously, updating the self-evaluation form (SEF) and school improvement plan was the responsibility of the head and the paper documents were reviewed during an annual staff meeting. With *schoolcentre.net*, all Brookfield’s improvement goals are stored electronically in

one place and staff can log on from school or from home to view and update the action points relevant to their role or attach evidence of any progress that has been made. This has enabled the SEF and school improvement plan to become constantly evolving documents.

**“It is easy to use and it has helped us to emphasise the invaluable contribution all our staff make to the achievement of our students and to the success of the school.”**

One of Brookfields School’s key targets is to ensure that their students with profound and multiple learning difficulties have access to an appropriate curriculum, through which it can be demonstrated that they are making outstanding progress. This target has been identified as a Key Priority in the school’s SEF and has subsequently been included in the school improvement plan.

“Using *schoolcentre.net* makes it easy for us to demonstrate the explicit links between the SEF and School Development Plan and the system allows all staff and governors to be part of the process of taking this target forward. We can attach all the supporting information and evidence for this and other targets to the relevant areas within *schoolcentre.net* and link these directly to the SEF. Doing this means that we don’t have to provide mountains of evidence files to Ofsted inspectors.”

*schoolcentre.net* is helping all staff at Brookfields work together to drive whole-school improvement and with such a large team of people working with children and

case study

their families, this approach is crucial to its continuing success.

“We are very pleased with how easily *schoolcentre.net* could be set up to meet our individual needs as a school and we are still exploring how it can support what we want to achieve. We will be looking at using the Performance Management area over the next year and we will investigate how the system can help us to meet the government’s deadline for providing parents with online reporting by 2010 for secondary and 2012 for primary school-aged students.”

**William Henry Smith School runs smoothly with *schoolcentre.net***

William Henry Smith School is a residential special school for boys aged eight to 16, located in Brighouse, West Yorkshire. As in many schools teaching children with special educational needs, Headteacher Brendan Heneghan has found that school improvement meetings can often be interrupted when incidences occur that need to be addressed immediately.

The school introduced *schoolcentre.net* in March 2007 so these interruptions have much less of an impact these days. All relevant notes and documents, such as the SEF and

school improvement plan, are stored online and changes are updated during the course of the meeting. This means that staff can pick up where they left off quickly and easily once incidences have been dealt with.

William Henry Smith is attended by 64 students with a variety of learning needs. “One of the most important changes I have noticed since the school began using *schoolcentre.net* is that school improvement is being driven from the grassroots up,” says Brendan. Although the leadership team is ultimately responsible for monitoring progress towards school development goals, the system has helped ensure staff from across the school take responsibility for their own areas of expertise within the school improvement plan.

“Using *schoolcentre.net*, individual areas of the self-evaluation form and school improvement plan are updated by the staff member doing the job rather than one of the administrative team so information can be entered quickly as progress is made.”

The leadership team can clearly see what actions need to be taken, who is leading them and what has been achieved in all areas of the school. When the decision was taken to introduce clay work into the Art

curriculum, for example, *schoolcentre.net* helped ensure the progress of this initiative was closely monitored to show any impact on pupil achievement. Any evidence is available to view on the system should Ofsted wish to see it.

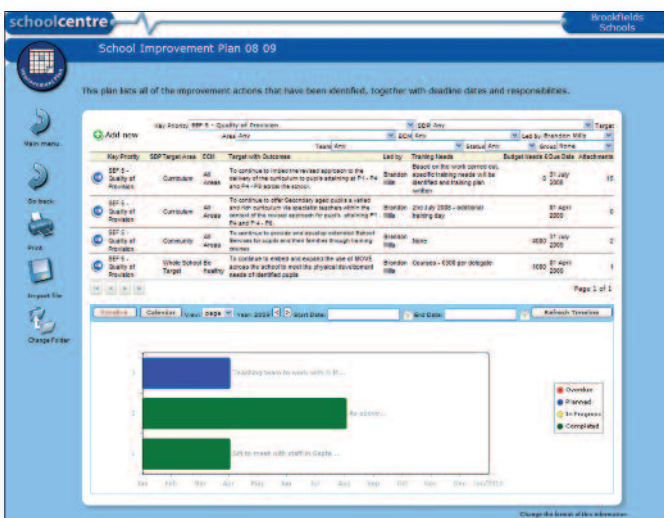
Brendan has also found that managing the finances associated with school improvement is much simpler with *schoolcentre.net*. The school has set the system up so that each action point is linked to a specific area of the school budget. The cost of implementing a new teaching strategy or purchasing a piece of equipment to support students’ learning, for example, can be automatically deducted from the money available in the budget. This makes it easier for the school to keep a close eye on spending and ensure resources are used effectively.

“We have seen a positive reaction from technical and non-technical staff alike since we began using the system. It is easy to use and it has helped us to emphasise the invaluable contribution all our staff make to the achievement of our students and to the success of the school.”

**April 2009**

**Benefits:**

- Provides direct links between SEF and School Improvement Plan
- Anytime-anywhere access by all staff and entire school community
- Enables all stakeholders to contribute to effective planning
- Fully customisable
- Embeds Every Child Matters into the planning process
- Easy attachment of evidence



Actions listed in the School Improvement Plan with a visual timeline

contact

For more information about *schoolcentre.net*:

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