

Going cashless offers peace of mind

Hugh Sexey CofE School: “Our decision to go cashless”

School Business Manager Jenny Farrell, from Hugh Sexey Church of England Middle School MAT in Somerset, outlines the reasons why they decided to become cashless: “With 590 pupils on roll, our aim was to reduce the amount of cash received in school, along with the time spent on associated tasks and processes such as counting cash, issuing receipts and reconciling”.

Jenny continues: “I had used ParentPay at my previous school, so knew how effective it was at improving processes including security”.

What process did you follow to select an online payment system?

Online payment systems differ depending on what schools require.

Jenny explains: “We needed a system that offered our parents an option to pay online as well as an alternative cash payment method, and ParentPay offers PayPoint. PayPoint still allows parents to pay cash, but rather than bring this into school, they can pay by going into one of their local PayPoint shops. This has proved essential as some parents still want to pay with cash, however the school doesn’t have to spend the time collecting, counting and banking it like we used to”.

Jenny also thought about how they would want to utilise the system they chose in the future: “Not only did we want to collect payments online for our trips and activities, but we planned to go cashless in the canteen, so the system needed to be flexible enough to be utilised for school dinner payments when we were ready”.

What are the key benefits you have gained?

Hugh Sexey CofE Middle School wanted to introduce an online payment system to predominantly increase efficiencies, and they did just that.

Jenny explains: “The main benefit school has gained from introducing online payments is the amount of time saved, that would have otherwise been spent on issuing receipts, and processing small payments”.

Jenny continues: “Not only have we saved on these tasks, but we have also found less time is spent banking, and because of the online audit trail, we have a more comprehensive record of payments received”.

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Objective:

Reduce the amount of cash received in school, along with the time spent on associated tasks and processes such as counting and reconciling and banking

Solution:

collect payments online for trips, and when ready, for meals too.

Outcomes:

Saved time on issuing receipts/counting/reconciling, less time is spent banking, and have a comprehensive record of payments received.



“Take up is in the region of 95%, so the cash volume has dropped significantly.”

Jenny Farrell,
School Business Manager
Hugh Sexey CofE
Middle School

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How were parents encouraged to get on board?

There are different approaches you can take when it comes to getting parents on board, Jenny details how they encouraged parents: “We took a supportive approach with parents, and have always offered to talk them through the sign-up process, or invited them into school to do so”.

Jenny continues: “In my experience I believe it is more beneficial to inform parents that no cash payments will be taken from a specified date, otherwise you end up with two systems, which creates more work. Having said that, there was a growing demand from parents for the option to help reduce the risk of pupils losing money; our take up is in the region of 95% so the cash volume has dropped significantly”.

Lessons to share with other schools

Depending on your school’s plan and objectives regarding online payments, there are different approaches to take when it comes to going cashless.

Jenny offers her advice: “If you are able to take a firm stance and say no cash payments in school from a specific date, I would recommend this, otherwise you have two systems to operate and record keeping can become onerous. We do make allowances when circumstances dictate; For example, parents of pupils in their final year have been less receptive to activating their account because their child is leaving, this is understandable, and we allowed this group to carry on as normal”.



Jenny also outlines her dream for the future: “Our long-term goal is that all three tier schools in our MAT will use ParentPay, meaning parents will only have to activate one account”.

Hugh Sexey’s message to other schools

Jenny summarises, based on her first-hand experience with ParentPay:

“ParentPay is quick and easy to use for parents and school, setting up an individual account takes a couple of minutes. The ParentPay communication centre is also useful; you can send emails to all pupils or an individual group. A message can be tailored specifically for the parents of those assigned to a particular trip. It is also possible to add cash payments to ParentPay if required, which keeps the control list up to date”.

There are a few points Jenny also shared regarding training and using ParentPay: “I would suggest at least 2 people are trained in using the system, that way, if one is ever absent for any reason, there is always someone to manage daily tasks. I would also fully recommend taking the time to process and complete all the training ParentPay offers, this will help you long term as you can exploit all the system has to offer. Time is always a thing we are short of, but making sure you know the system from the beginning is key”.

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