

Hampshire school more efficient without cash

Why Kings' School wanted to go cashless

Helen Tyrrell, Senior Finance Officer at Kings' School in Hampshire outlines the reasons the school wanted to introduce online payments, but there was one main reason in particular: "We needed to reduce the amount of cash coming into school, with the large amount of students we have, it was too time consuming to process cash payments, there had to be another, more efficient way to manage this process: whilst also making it easier for parents to make payments to the school."

How did you select a provider?

Helen explains: "We wanted a solution that would be easy to manage and would work with our banking requirements. The cost of the solution was also important to us. We reviewed several solutions online, and decided to invite ParentPay to come into school and demonstrate their system."

The key reasons, Helen adds, as to why Kings' School selected ParentPay as their online payment provider: "Ease of use, how the software looked and performed was important, coupled with its compatibility with our cashless till system in the canteen and SIMS. Other deciding factors were ParentPay's value for money and the support we would receive, both during the set up and down the line. This ensured the process ran as smoothly as possible."

What benefits have Kings' School realised?

Helen outlines the key benefits to the school and parents since going cashless: "A big plus for us, is parents find it easier to pay online now, as it's more convenient. This in turn means less cash is handled in school, and more time is saved from no longer having to process and reconcile thousands of payments."

Helen continues: "Trips are easier to manage, as they are all added centrally to ParentPay, which keeps all records and payments in one place. Also, as the system fits in with our cashless tills in the canteen, we have gained more efficiencies here too."

Getting parents engaged

Helen explains how to get parents on board: "We send out letters to all new staff and parents of pupils to make them aware of the process and how they are expected to pay. We have also added the ParentPay logo to our school website to make access as easy as possible, and to raise further awareness."

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Objective:

Reduce the amount of cash coming into school. Improve processes

Solution:

Introduce an easy to use, efficient online payment system compatible with existing systems

Outcomes:

Saved time/ resource. Meals and trips are easier to pay for/manage. Easier, more convenient for parents.



“Compatibility with our cashless till system in the canteen and SIMS was important”

Helen Tyrrell,
Senior Finance Officer
Kings' School

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Lessons to share with other schools

Have a plan, Helen outlines: I would advise schools to ensure they market online payments properly, give it a high profile. Ensure parents are aware of the benefits to them, of using the system, not just the school. Be sure to send out their activation letter as soon as possible to encourage early uptake, and that all correspondence relating to paying money to the school, points to paying online via ParentPay or with cash via PayPoint at a local store."

Kings' Schools message to other schools

Helen comments on her over all experience: "The transition from our previous manual process to using ParentPay was really simple. The software is easy to use and the parents like using ParentPay on the whole. We do get some queries from parents, but they are minimal. The support we receive from ParentPay has been very good, and I have always found them to be really helpful whenever I have needed to contact them."



“ ...All correspondence relating to paying money to the school, points to paying online via ParentPay or with cash via PayPoint at a local store ”

Helen Tyrrell, Senior Finance Officer, Kings' School

Going cashless checklist

1. Have a clear strategy and sell the benefits to staff and parents: In September, all NEW parents will be required to pay for all school items online. For those that do not have online payment facilities, cash payments will be accepted through PayPoint . Alternatively, from September, ALL parents will be required to pay online or through PayPoint.
2. Raise awareness and interest: Consult with pupils and parents so they know the procedure, use parent evenings, emails and newsletters to let everyone know when and how they can make cashless payments.
3. Have a plan that can deliver your strategy: Central to your plan should be communication with parents and with staff. Where required, ensure that school staff managing ParentPay are confident in using the system.
4. Maximise opportunities to make paying online attractive to parents e.g. trips/clubs are available to pay for online.
5. Spark action: Consider regular promotions to encourage parents to pay online or through PayPoint e.g. Christmas meal needs to be ordered and paid for online, do not accept cash payments for trips in school etc.
6. Be inclusive and provide for cash-based payers: Not everyone has a bank card/account or ability to pay online, so ensure the school offers a socially inclusive payment option such as PayPoint.
7. Remind parents of their log in credentials to boost uptake: Parents may have forgotten their username/password or misplaced their activation letter. Whatever the reason may be, give them a nudge in the cashless direction: narrow down the non-active users by using the ParentPay Communication Centre, and send them a polite reminder of their log in details.
8. Remember to alert parents when items are due for payment: Providing balance or new payment item updates via SMS and email alerts to parents will help increase uptake and reduce parental debt.