

EDUCATION

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Within seconds we can pull a simple report to see school purchasing histories across our schools, at the department level, or even at the individual level.

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Donald Freeman, Director of Finance

Northwood Schools, a consortium of four interconnected independent schools located in Clapham, South-West London, employs approximately 200 staff members and serves over 3,000 students across various grade levels in a day-school setting.

The group includes Broomwood Hall Lower, Broomwood Hall Upper, Northcote Lodge, and Northwood Senior. Collectively, these institutions provide an outstanding education for boys and girls aged 4 to 16 across four different sites.

Northwood Schools is committed to fostering academic excellence while also offering a wide range of extracurricular activities, including sports, performing arts, and community initiatives. However, the organisation faced increasing challenges related to procurement, spending oversight, and budget management. To address these concerns, Northwood Schools turned to PLANERGY, a powerful spend management and procurement solution.

Challenges

Before implementing PLANERGY, Northwood Schools struggled with several key issues:



Lack of Spend Visibility:

Administrators had difficulty gaining a clear view of overall expenditure. With multiple departments and campuses making independent purchasing decisions, tracking budgets and monitoring financial outflows was an ongoing challenge.



Manual and Inefficient Approval Processes:

The organisation relied on paper-based and email-based approval workflows. These outdated methods led to inefficiencies, delays, and a lack of proper oversight.



Decentralised Purchasing Practices:

Teachers and staff could make purchases independently, which often resulted in inconsistent tracking, a lack of coordination, and the risk of exceeding allocated budgets.



Inaccurate Accounting and Reporting:

The finance department frequently received incomplete or incorrect purchase records, leading to inaccurate bookkeeping and difficulties in reconciling budgets.



Invoice and Payment Verification Issues:

There were instances where invoices were processed and paid without proper verification against purchase orders, increasing the risk of duplicate payments, errors, and even fraud.

The Solution

Northwood Schools implemented PLANERGY to modernize their procurement operations and establish more efficient financial controls. With PLANERGY's advanced automation and tracking capabilities, the organisation was able to:



Move to a Paperless Procurement System:

The transition from a manual, paper-based system to a digital platform streamlined purchasing approvals and increased operational efficiency.



Enhance Budget Compliance:

PLANERGY provided real-time tracking of departmental budgets, ensuring that teachers and staff only spent within their allocated limits.



Implement Three-Way Matching:

PLANERGY enabled Northwood Schools to implement a three-way matching process, ensuring that invoices, purchase orders, and delivery confirmations were aligned before payments were processed. This reduced the risk of errors and eliminated duplicate payments.



Improve Visibility and Control:

Administrators gained full visibility into procurement activities, making it easier to track expenses, detect cost-saving opportunities, and optimize vendor relationships.



Integrate Automated Approval Workflows:

PLANERGY's approval workflows ensured that all purchase requests were reviewed and authorised promptly, reducing delays and eliminating unauthorised spending.



Streamline Vendor Management:

The platform allowed the organisation to consolidate purchasing from preferred vendors, negotiate better contract terms, and maintain cost efficiency.

Results

The adoption of PLANERGY led to significant improvements in Northwood Schools' procurement and financial management processes:



Time Savings and Increased Efficiency:

By digitising procurement and automating approval workflows, Northwood Schools drastically reduced procurement processing times. Teachers and staff could focus more on education rather than administrative tasks.



Stronger Budgetary Control:

Real-time budget tracking helped department heads and administrators make informed financial decisions, ensuring that funds were allocated wisely and effectively.



Greater Cost Savings:

With better vendor management and improved spend analysis, the organisation identified savings opportunities, reduced wasteful spending, and negotiated better pricing with suppliers.



Improved Financial Accuracy:

The implementation of three-way matching minimised discrepancies, ensuring that every invoice aligned with a verified purchase order and delivery receipt before payment was made.



Reduced Fraud and Errors:

By eliminating manual invoice processing, the risk of unauthorised payments, duplicate invoices, and financial mismanagement was significantly reduced.



Data-Driven Decision-Making:

With comprehensive spend analytics and reporting, Northwood Schools gained valuable insights into procurement trends, helping them refine their financial strategies and improve long-term budget planning.



The Impact on Northwood Schools

The transformation brought about by PLANERGY has significantly improved the way Northwood Schools manages procurement and spending. Staff members now experience a smoother, more efficient process when acquiring resources, while finance teams have greater confidence in the accuracy and reliability of financial data. The enhanced oversight has ensured better budget adherence and increased accountability at all levels of the organisation.

Furthermore, PLANERGY has helped Northwood Schools build stronger relationships with their

suppliers. With a centralized system in place, the organisation can leverage its purchasing power, consolidate orders, and negotiate more favorable terms, ultimately leading to further cost savings.

From an administrative perspective, the switch to a digital procurement system has also reduced paperwork and enhanced operational efficiency, allowing staff to focus more on their core responsibilities rather than chasing approvals and managing spreadsheets.



Conclusion

By implementing PLANERGY, Northwood Schools has transformed its procurement and financial management systems, gaining full control over spending, improving efficiency, and unlocking substantial cost savings. The organisation now benefits from a transparent, automated procurement process that aligns with its financial goals while ensuring compliance with spending policies.

The successful adoption of PLANERGY has positioned Northwood Schools as a forward-thinking educational institution that

embraces technological solutions to enhance its operations. With better procurement management, increased cost efficiency, and greater financial oversight, the school is now better equipped to allocate resources effectively and maintain its commitment to delivering high-quality education.

As Northwood Schools continues to grow and expand, PLANERGY remains an essential tool in maintaining financial discipline, optimizing procurement processes, and supporting strategic decision-making.

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