MIS helps Cuffley School hit all the right notes for best behaviour

When a village primary and nursery school near Potters Bar was looking to encourage good behaviour from its pupils, they were able to utilise the data processing power of their MIS to create a reward system to positively impact children, staff and families.

Cuffley School is a foundation, two-form entry primary and nursery school with approximately 450 pupils on roll. Located four miles east of Potters Bar, Hertfordshire, the school prides itself on having a warm and friendly ethos, where every child matters and is eager to come to school.

In the 2021/22 academic year, Cuffley School joined a two-year government project to further improve the behaviour of pupils. Standards at the school were already very good and acknowledged by Ofsted, but the school felt they could still move forward and do better, tightening up their procedures and practices, particularly with regards to tracking behaviour data (both positive and negative incidents) and encouraging good behaviour from pupils across all year groups. They had also noticed a change in the children's understanding of the expected behaviours following Covid.

Tracy Farmer, assistant headteacher at Cuffley School, said: "We used CPOMS to record serious behavioural concerns, but other than that we didn't have a record of student behaviour – positive or negative – and this made it difficult to retrieve data and spot trends. I thought there must be something out there that could help us, so my headteacher Wendy Wing and I started looking for a solution. On a visit to another school in her role as a School Effectiveness Advisor, Wendy discovered a school using their Arbor MIS system to track behaviour, and we started exploring if that could be a solution for us.

"We had recently moved across to the Arbor system but had no idea we could use it in that way".

Tracy spoke to the MIS advisors at HFL Education about what they wanted to achieve and the data they wanted to record. The school's behaviour policy was shared with HFL to ensure the set up of behaviour details in Arbor would mirror the school's own policy, and after a few online meetings and emails back and forth, HFL created a tailored package in the Arbor MIS for Cuffley School.

The HFL team provided the school with training in how to use the new functionality, which could then be shared with the full teaching and support staff teams.

The behaviour tracker created by HFL for Cuffley School records all incidents, positive and negative, for all children from Nursery up to Year 6. Adding incidents into the system is easy to do using simple drop-down menus, and all staff are encouraged to use it – including lunchtime supervisors, office staff and teaching assistants. As the behaviour tracker is run on the MIS which holds family contact information for each child, the details of positive incidents can be shared with the child's family or carers via email the same day as a 'Positive Note'.

Tracy says: "We didn't want to make the Positive Notes a chore for staff or add to their workload, so the system was designed to be really simple and quick to use. It takes just a couple of minutes to log a positive behaviour occurrence and to send the note to parents or carers using customisable email templates. We set an internal target of ensuring each child is recognised positively for their behaviour once each half term, but our teachers and staff are easily exceeding this target. There's been no impact on workloads so far, but there has been a very positive impact on the school community.

"We've had some amazing feedback from our parents and carers about the Positive Notes. They tell us they love to receive our notifications to tell them about how kind or thoughtful their child has been, or how well they have done in class – it makes their day. We are told that the Positive Notes are often used as conversation starters after school, which keeps the momentum going as the child gets to talk about the great thing they did in class or at break, and their good behaviour is recognised at home.

"Stickers are great to reward behaviour within school, and we still do that to give pupils instant feedback, but those stickers rarely make it on the jumper to the end of the day! We felt we were quite good at recognising positive behaviour before, but when we took a step back, we realised we weren't really communicating it properly to parents. The Positive Notes are much more impactful for our children and their families."

In a recent survey carried out by the school, 90% of parents and carers felt that the introduction of 'Positive Notes' at Cuffley School had had a positive impact on their child's behaviour. In addition, 87% thought the Positive Notes had improved parent communication, and 72% would like to see the same approach applied to negative behaviour incidents.

As well as encouraging best behaviour, taking a data-driven approach offers Cuffley School the opportunity to track and proactively action negative behaviour too. While parents don't currently get emails home about negative incidents, the school can see from the data where there are consistent concerns about children's unwanted behaviours. The details of negative incidents can be collated using Arbor and are currently used to support teachers during parent meetings and to highlight issues and trends, so everyone can work together to get to the bottom of problems and help support pupils better.

Cuffley School moved over to the Arbor MIS system in 2022 with the help of HFL Education's MIS support team for the migration, and Tracy feels they are only just getting started with using the new software to its full potential: "We used to have a number of extra apps for different functions, such as lunch payments, but since moving to Arbor, we've been able to consolidate them all into one platform. We know there is so much more can do with Arbor, and we are looking at setting up alerts and potentially sending out our school reports in the future.

"What we are doing with the behaviour tracking and Positive Notes is turning heads at other schools, who want to see if they can do it at their setting using their MIS. There's so

much potential in your MIS, you just need to have the right help and support to be able to access it."