



## THE WILLOWS SCHOOL AND EARLY YEARS CENTRE IMPROVING STAFF PERFORMANCE TO DIRECTLY IMPACT PUPIL ATTAINMENT

### Executive Summary

The Willows School and Early Years Centre (EYC) is based in Milton Keynes and has pupils from nursery up to Year 2. In 2013, the school was facing the ever-increasing focus on children's outcomes, challenges associated with a significant staff team and the issue of linking staff pay to performance. All of this meant that delivering the best service to children, whilst ensuring that teachers received a fair review and felt motivated, was becoming increasingly tough.

Introducing the Transcend modules and working with their services team to implement a bespoke solution has had a positive impact on staff performance and contributed directly to closing the gap in children's outcomes.

### 5 Core Culture Elements

- Children & Family Focus
- Self-Motivation & Organisation
- Communication & Interpersonal Skills
- Quality & Results Focus
- Team Working & Leading



### 3 Top Tips

- Ensure that any solution is tailored for your school to reflect its individual values and culture
- Get your team involved in defining the culture and outcomes in order to improve staff engagement
- Give staff time to learn the system and complete their input

**MEASURE - UNDERSTAND - IMPROVE**

## Challenges

The Willows School and EYC has a broad mix of backgrounds and abilities within its almost 200 children. The majority are ESL (English as a Second Language) and the extra support offered to families within the community means staffing needs are quite varied - additional therapists and assistants support a proportionally small number of teachers. In 2013 the teachers' pay review system was still highly paper based, but with the new directive from September that year linking pay to performance, a more comprehensive solution was needed.

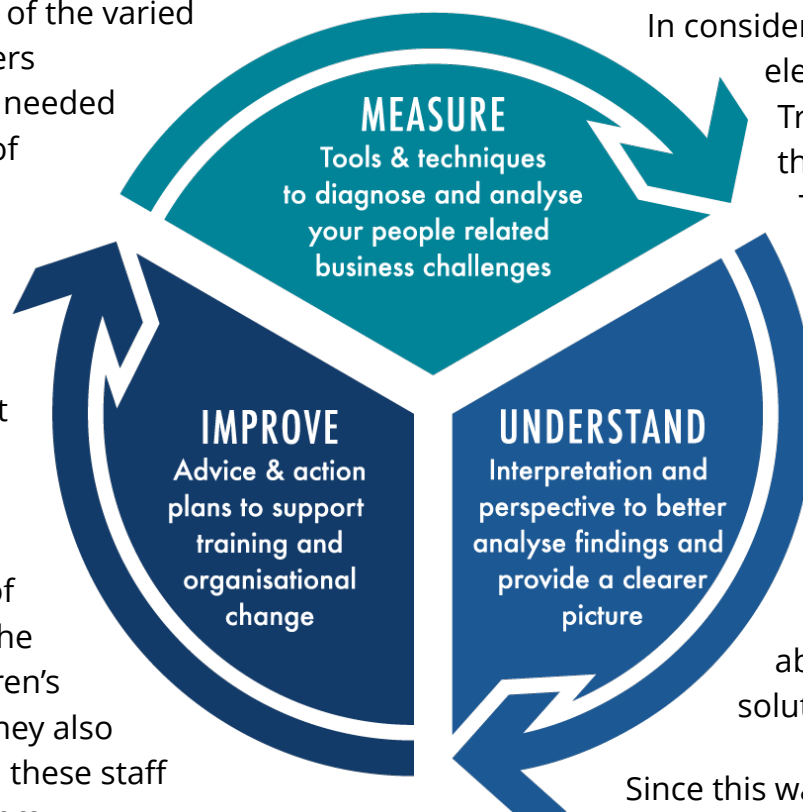
Furthermore, because of the varied roles that staff members undertook, the school needed a more personal way of recognising individual achievements to further increase motivation.

It became obvious that the school needed a clear and coherent appraisal system for everyone, regardless of the work they did. At the time, they had a Children's Centre attached and they also needed to incorporate these staff into the appraisal system.

Jo Orbell, the Willows Headteacher, got in contact with Paul and his team at Transcend, as she knew of the work he had done with local businesses to help improve performance. She made it clear from the outset that the system needed to be customised for the school and Paul agreed to work with Jo and the team to build a solution that was fit for purpose at The Willows.

## The right solution

In the past, teachers had a formal appraisal which was usually approached at the last minute and, as a result, somewhat rushed. Other staff members had an even more ad-hoc approach which had led to past performance and discipline issues which could have been prevented. Jo wanted a system that was relevant, completely transparent and specifically tailored for the staff, meaning that everyone could see the benefits and had a clear development path.



In considering the technology elements of the Transcend suite, Jo and the consulting team at Transcend designed a package that suited their needs. Using Jo's knowledge of the school's specific needs combined with Transcend's wider sector and private industry knowledge, they were able to build the ideal solution.

Since this was more expensive than selecting a generic solution, it was important to get the Governors' buy-in to the solution. During the Governors' decision-making process, they discussed a historical situation with an off the shelf product that hadn't worked. This led them to express their keenness to proceed and the Governors agreed to buy in to the solution for an initial two-year period.

## Ensuring it works

The Transcend Consulting team spent a day at the school looking at key culture and performance elements with the staff team. They initially had 25 elements that they felt were important but by using the Transcend modules, they managed to narrow this down to 12. By being involved in the process, staff really bought in to the system and the ideas. It was important they were listened to and allowed to help shape the team culture in this way.

At the conclusion of the process, the team defined 5 core elements that reflected the school culture and ethos as a whole and were relevant for everyone. There were an additional 3 for teachers (including teaching standards) and an additional 2 for senior leaders within the school. The system also had the ability to add staff individual targets, commentary and evidence so it really was relevant to all.

One key contributor to the success of the process was that staff were given a development day to learn the system and were given support to do so. Even those who were self-proclaimed computer-phobes said it was straightforward and easy to use.

*Jo Orbell (Headteacher) is keen to point out the advantages of a tailored system:*

*"A key benefit of the system for our school, which has such a wide variety of staff, is that it is completely bespoke for us. The culture of a school doesn't have to be solely about education.*

*Our school has a strong ethos in supporting its families and so the focus is often on providing an environment in which children feel safe and happy. Their learning will then follow more naturally."*

## Formal appraisals that everyone benefits from

Now all staff at the school have 3 reviews per year and these are productive meetings that are focused on what has happened. They allow individuals and their managers to celebrate achievements and highlights as well as ensure support is given when needed. At the end of year, staff meetings are led by individuals not managers. When they review performance ratings together, they are able to provide evidence of differences and it has introduced much more collaboration.



### Measure

Define desired culture and compare with current culture



### Understand

Design a roadmap to achieve the desired culture



### Improve

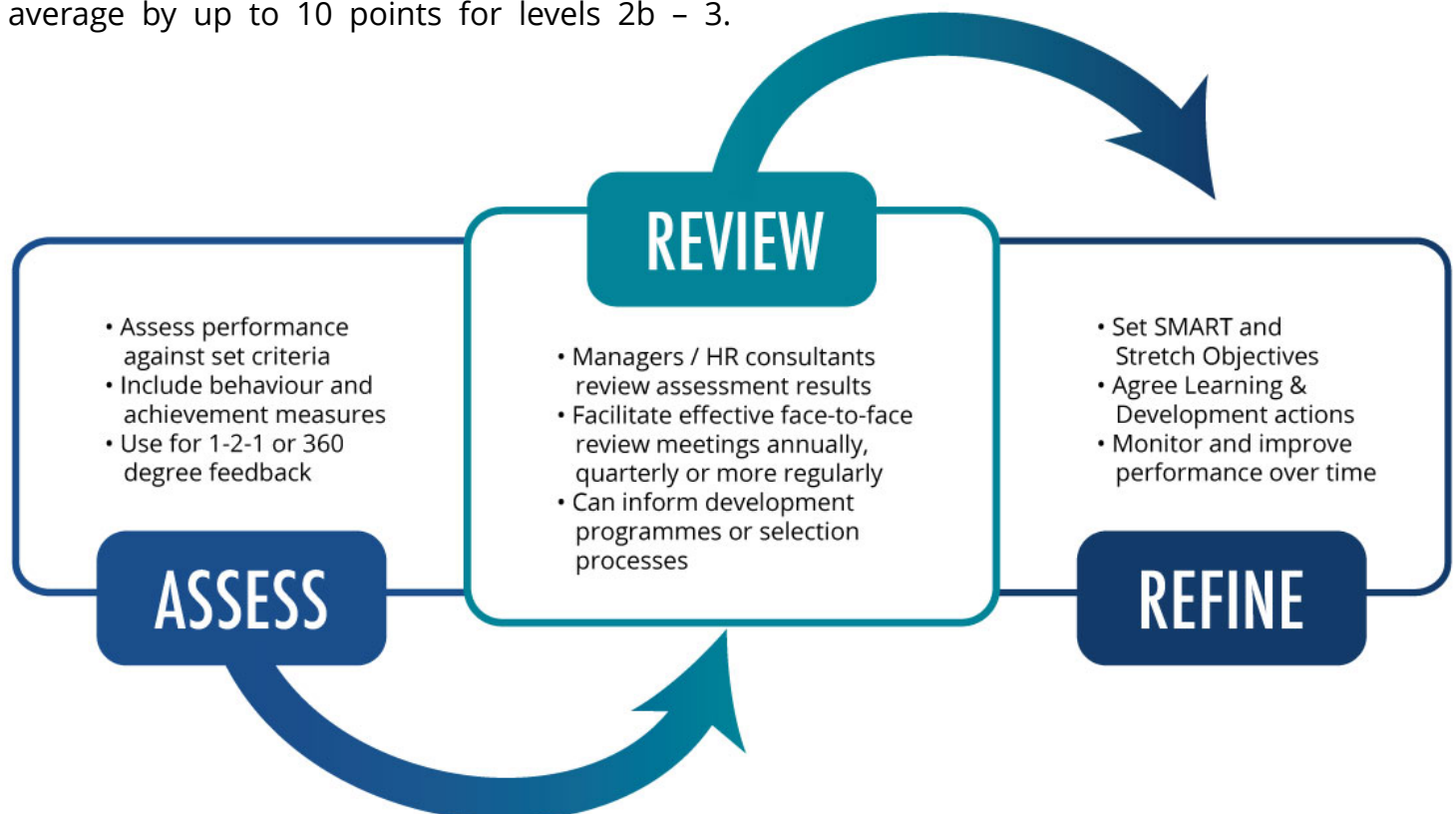
Ease transitions (e.g. mergers, restructures, strategy change)

## Engaged, well performing staff leads to happy children that also learn

There is now clear evidence for the Head to speak to Governors with rationale to support pay rises. Equally the value added by staff making other contributions outside of key performance criteria can be recognised and rewarded.

The system has helped to pick up on areas for support and CPD training earlier than previously. When these training needs were not spotted until the end of the academic year, the individual and their pupils lost out. This has therefore saved money as well as improved overall performance.

The greatest benefit of all has been the improved outcomes for children because of the focused targets for staff and all the competencies included within the process. The year the system was implemented was the first year they were above the national average for children's outcomes and they closed the gap considerably, being consistently above average by up to 10 points for levels 2b - 3.



At the end of the first year, the School made some changes to the system to further simplify the process for them. They did this in conjunction with the Transcend services team, who also provided honest feedback by challenging elements which they felt were important and explaining to the school why they should be retained. This challenge was appreciated and helped the school get even more value from the system.

Jo, the Headteacher, summarises the significant positive impact of the project by saying:

*“Having the right culture changed the attitude within my staff team, making them feel empowered, engaged and appreciated. The system facilitated a culture shift that has a positive impact throughout the school – staff and children alike.”*

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WITH A FLEXIBLE RANGE OF CUSTOMISABLE SOLUTIONS AND SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCE IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR, TECHNOLOGY BECOMES AN ENABLER SUPPORTED BY EXPERTISE TO ADDRESS YOUR CHALLENGES. THE RESULT IS AN ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE THAT CREATES AND MAINTAINS HIGH PERFORMING TEAMS.

- OUR CULTURE SOLUTION WILL ALLOW YOU TO DESIGN A ROADMAP FOR TEAMS, INDIVIDUALS OR THE ENTIRE SCHOOL TO ACHIEVE YOUR DESIRED WORKING CULTURE.
- OUR PERFORMANCE MODULE WILL THEN ALLOW YOU TO TRANSLATE THIS CULTURE INTO EXPECTED BEHAVIOURS AND THEN EMBED THEM INTO THE ONGOING PERFORMANCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF ALL STAFF.
- WHILST STARTING WITH THE MOST RELEVANT MODULES FROM OUR RANGE, YOU CAN ALSO MAKE USE OF FURTHER MODULES OVER TIME FOR A BROADER SOLUTION IF REQUIRED.

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