REAch2 - implementing Arbor across a large nationwide trust

REAch2 is the largest primary trust in the UK. They went to tender for MIS in 2017, hoping to consolidate their schools' disparate systems into one complete package. Since August 2018, they have been using Arbor across their 60 Primaries.

With around 20,000 students spread across the south east and midlands, live and automatic data aggregation at all levels was a must to help leaders see the big picture. Their goals at a trust level were improving reporting processes throughout the trust by implementing this live view of their schools, cost saving by eliminating third party systems, and aligning their schools with an MIS that served all their needs. As a large trust, standardisation could also help them to increase productivity and efficiency day to day, since training programmes and setup could be shared and repeated across schools.

**60 schools
20,000+ students
10 regional hubs**

Why REAch2 chose Arbor

The tender feedback from REAch2:

A great core product

"Excellent core functionality. Utilisation of national ASP data within the system was considered very positive. Live solution provided access to data real time, and was seamless and intuitive."

High quality service

"Quality of service and KPIs are comprehensively documented. SLAs for responses and resolution provided in accordance with REAch2 expectations. Regular performance meetings with impact data being shared with REAch2 to further demonstrate value. All subcontractors use ISO 27001 and GDPR compliant."

A clear plan for change

"Proposed methodology documented in extensive detail. Clear implementation plan for schools. Good understanding of our requirements."

The migration journey

Arbor has moved more MATs to a cloud based MIS than any other provider. We brought that experience to bear for REAch2 by iterating our tried, tested, and repeatable implementation programme across each of their 10 regions and within each individual school.

Autumn Term 2017– Spring Term 2018: REAch2 go to tender and choose Arbor MIS as the unified MIS solution for all of their schools as well as the central trust. Project management begins by planning a four wave rollout over six months. The schools in each wave are decided on in collaboration with the trust, based on existing contract end dates, regional clusters, and readiness to move. Each wave will have its own group training days prior to going live, with schools in the later waves able to attend earlier training sessions as well as their own to better prepare them for the move.

August 2018: The first wave of 'pioneer schools' receive training and go live. The pioneer schools test out new modules in order to share best practice across the trust. For instance, Heath Hayes has pioneered the communication modules of Arbor and now has 94% of parents engaged on the Parent Portal.

October 2018: The second wave of schools receive training and go live.

January 2019: The final wave of schools receive training and go live. Similar to how these schools were able to attend the training in earlier waves to help prepare them, schools from earlier waves are able to attend these sessions as refresher training.

Throughout 2019: The MIS is further embedded in the schools through close collaboration between trust and Arbor project teams. Schools have independence over how much of the system to use – the trust procures a central contract for Arbor Core, and upgrades to Arbor Comms or Arbor Perform which bring modules like communications, curriculum tracking, meals and payments are decided on at the school level. All schools have now graduated from the implementation phase to Account Management.

Training can be delivered ad hoc according to need as each school has their own Account Manager contact, but there are also trust-wide training efforts such as specific headteacher training days after implementation, to engage school leadership in the MIS once business managers and admins were familiar. As part of the project management, operational success workshops are held where schools can discuss MIS best practice and provide direct feedback to visiting Arbor team members.

2020: Goals include developing a trust-wide standardised training programme to build on from successful prior experiments like the operational success workshops.

"Arbor has transformed the way the school works by having everything in one place. It's easy and intuitive to use allowing us to focus on what matters most in the school – the students"

Sascha Batters, Business Manager at Kemsley Academy, Reach2 Academy Trust

Arbor