

# How St Nicolas Primary School transformed their assessment approach with Arbor and HelloData

St Nicolas is a 2-form entry maintained primary school in Abingdon, Oxfordshire, with an ethos centred around encouraging every stakeholder to “Navigate, Inspire, Challenge and Succeed”. We sat down with Lorna, the Deputy Head responsible for Assessment and Pupil Premium, to discuss how St Nicolas is using Arbor MIS and helloData together to support their school improvement.

## What’s your approach to assessment?

We focus on Assessment for Learning, using continuous assessment alongside the “Teach-Practice-Apply” model to respond to children’s needs. We use Learning Cards to record our formative assessments to reflect children’s progress. These are shared with parents and children so they can see what they need to achieve by the end of the year and be fully involved in their achievements. We also use standardised tests three times a year, as well as all statutory assessments. We use a strengths-based approach to moderation using learning conversations, alongside data and knowledge of the child to secure judgements.

[Arbor MIS](#)[helloData](#)

Number of pupils  
400

Location  
Abingdon

Part of the Arbor  
Community since  
June 2023



Lorna Page  
Deputy Headteacher

## How were you tracking assessments before you moved to Arbor with helloData?

We were using a server based MIS which was labour intensive for all users in the school. I used to end up doing a lot of the mark entry myself because teachers found the assessment tool time consuming. The exports functionality was limited, for example, during parents evenings, teachers would print off separate attendance summaries for students so that they could look at this side by side with their progress data. It was difficult to get all the information and analysis in one place.

## What made you decide to switch to Arbor with helloData?

It was our Business Manager who first suggested we look at switching to a cloud based MIS, as the office team wanted a more user-friendly system. It didn't give them the reports they needed for attendance and it couldn't do the parental engagement side of things at all. She introduced me to Arbor and I thought it looked great, especially from a teacher's perspective.

We have used helloData effectively for many years and they were able to assist with the set up of Arbor assessment. This meant we were able to continue to access our historic data ensuring a smooth transition. It also meant we could keep the reporting of our assessment data the same, reducing my workload!

## How has the switch changed the way you work?

Teachers find the Arbor marksheets easy to input their data and the bulk fill tool makes the process quick and easy. Teachers like the attendance and demographic information which is quickly accessible. Arbor provides headline information, and we use helloData to dig deeper into the analysis to identify areas for celebration, patterns and trends and areas for improvement.

helloData is an incredible suite of analysis tools for primary assessment. It gives us a depth of information on one screen, and the information can be easily manipulated to look closer at a particular aspect. For example, you can toggle to different subjects or year groups by clicking one button, so you don't have to come out of the page and back in again. If you're looking at progress, you can see the steps really clearly (in percentage terms and pupil count).



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**Lorna Page**  
Deputy Headteacher, St  
Nicolas Primary School



This is really important for those pupil progress meetings, as you're not having to scramble around making sense of the data, it's already there for you. Another benefit is the governor report dashboard where everything is anonymised, supporting 'live' questions during a governors' meeting. The reports can be generated and used to create data packages that support our monitoring.

Because Arbor and helloData are linked, we use the two systems together and we don't have to manually update anything. This means that teachers find it really easy to enter the marks and I can get exactly what I need in terms of analysis - without having to duplicate data entry or use spreadsheets!

## What impact has this had on your school?

We now have a modern, easy to access cloud-based MIS, enabling all members of staff to input and review the information that is key to their role. With the added benefit of also having helloData to provide specialist knowledge in assessment and expertise in data analytics.

Teachers have more ownership over their class assessment data as they find Arbor more user friendly. The integration of both systems means that as a school, we spend less time entering data and helloData can provide in depth analysis quickly.

We found the process of switching to Arbor was a useful process in itself, providing a good opportunity to step back and really think about how we wanted to assess and what kind of information we wanted to produce at the other end.

As SLT, using Arbor with helloData has given us better insight into our data - we find the information much more meaningful now, because you can see what the biggest concerns are and immediately investigate. This has been the quickest round of analysis I've ever done!

## What would you say to other schools considering switching to Arbor and helloData?

Do it! Arbor is really intuitive for teachers to use, and the impact is that we have fast, responsive knowledge of assessment. helloData will support you on your journey with the transition and ensure it meets your requirements.



**“Everything is just so much more visual - Arbor is really intuitive for teachers to use, and the impact is that we have fast, responsive knowledge of assessment (quickly and without panicking!)”**

**Lorna Page**  
Deputy Headteacher, St Nicolas Primary School



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