Streamlining HR for over 300 staff members at Penk Valley Academy Trust with SAMpeople

Trust
Four Primary schools and three Secondary schools

Hazel Macey
HR Officer at Penk Valley Academy Trust

Number of staff
317

Using
SAMpeople
SAMpeople Recruit

> "We had filing cabinets full of paperwork—signed codes of conduct, versions of single central records—it was so higgledy-piggledy. The sheer amount of data and paperwork involved was overwhelming. We knew we needed a change."

Penk Valley Academy Trust is a growing trust made up of seven schools built on the values of collaboration, challenge, curiosity, and care. We connected with Hazel to learn how SAMpeople has not only streamlined operational HR processes but also empowered her team with modern tools, helping them to better support and develop their people.

Managing HR across seven schools with misaligned processes was no small feat. The trust struggled to effectively oversee HR as each school relied on outdated paper-based HR processes. This lack of coordination made it hard for the trust to keep accurate records and follow education regulations.

Hazel faced challenges such as:

- **Fragmented Single Central Records (SCRs):** Multiple spreadsheets made it tough for Hazel and her team to do audits and safeguarding reviews.

- **Staff absence management:** Different ways of tracking and addressing absences were time-consuming, and needed extra admin work.

- **Disjointed compliance tracking:** There was no uniform approach to contract management and policies or maintaining compliance across the seven schools.

Choosing the right HR solution

Penk Valley's journey with SAMpeople began with using SAMpeople Recruit. They were impressed by its capabilities, which helped them confidently attract, manage, and onboard new staff. That's why they expanded to SAMpeople for all round people management. **"When we saw what SAMpeople could achieve for our HR records, it was a no-brainer,"** Hazel shared.

Transitioning to SAMpeople involved gradually onboarding its nine modules. Hazel led the charge, prioritising three key areas:

1. Get the schools to go paperless

To modernise record-keeping, Hazel focused on digitising historical documents and making sure all staff records were centralised in SAMpeople. Hazel explained, **"We're scanning everything, all of their historical documents, uploading it to SAMpeople, so we've got an actual true picture of every school, every staff, and every staff cohort."**

Having documents in SAMpeople improves visibility over all employee information, including signed codes of conduct, their working patterns, contracts, vetting checks, and training. The Single Central Record module supports Hazel's focus on making sure the required information is recorded, creating a single source of truth.

2. Improve staff absence coordination

Hazel's second goal was to improve absence coordination. **"We wanted to get that under control, and that is so easy to do with the SAMpeople system. You can stay in control of your system."** Hazel noted.

With SAMpeople's absence management module, Hazel can monitor absences in real time using live dashboards. These dashboards not only provide detailed insights into the number, cost, and type of absences across the trust but also highlight trends in absences and costs. All to support Hazel with proactive decision-making. Plus, the system's automatic identification of absence triggers and colour-coded indicators empower Hazel to act quickly and manage absences more effectively.

3. Empower line managers and their teams

Lastly, Hazel and her team focused on building line managers' confidence using SAMpeople's Absence Management module, explaining, **" We're empowering our line managers to understand that functionality as well. So we're maintaining overall HR control, but we're helping our staff have their finger on the pulse with their teams to know what's going on. It's been great."**

In SAMpeople, Hazel supports line managers in creating and managing trigger watchlists, monitoring trends, and initiating new cases—all while maintaining a trust-level overview. The built-in reporting tools at employee, school, and trust levels keep all stakeholders informed.

Introducing SAMpeople has:

Significantly reduced the paper load.

Hazel shared, **"The reduction in paper has been the best change for us since SAMpeople because, yes, there are certain things legally you still need to have your signatures for. But, for some things, once we've got it scanned in, we've got it added to our documents, it's done. It's not needed anymore, and it's just wonderful. It's streamlined our processes. It's made us much more efficient."**

Improved compliance with SCR.

The trust now uses the SAMpeople's Single Central Record for a visual, colour-coded format that helps them keep track of what key information is missing. Hazel likes that **"It's a very visual system. With red, amber, and green indicators, we know exactly where we stand."** It has also simplified safeguarding and compliance checks. Hazel noted, **"During a safeguarding audit, the reviewers were thrilled with SAMpeople's setup. It was a proud moment for us."**

Improved Staff Absence Management.

SAMpeople gives Hazel the tools to track absences, monitor trends, and implement consistent processes across all schools. **"We're very proud of where we are with our staff absence management, thanks to SAMpeople,"** she explained. By reducing absences, Hazel and her team have been able to improve support for employees, address trends quickly, and manage cases effectively. This has helped reduce the time, cost, and impact of absences on children's learning and education standards.

Simplified reporting across the trust.

Hazel now generates detailed reports for trustees and governors with ease. She explains, **"It's just a click of a button. We can generate reports and keep our fingers on the pulse. When it comes time to produce reports for the chief executive, trustees, or governors, it's incredibly helpful. Even on a little level, we run reports on where we are with the signing of staff code of conducts, keeping children safe in education, and prevent training."**

Penk Valley Academy Trust's adoption of SAMpeople has revolutionised their HR processes, from managing absences to maintaining a consistent approach to contract management and policies. SAMpeople has become an important support for Hazel and her team. **"We knew it was a good system, but seeing it in action has exceeded our expectations. Absolutely. I'd recommend SAMpeople to any trust or school."**

Discover how SAMpeople can help your school or trust work smarter and focus on what matters most.

Get in touch at **sampeople.co.uk/book-a-demo**