



“We needed to be one trust, not 14 schools”: why Asset Education upgraded from ScholarPack to Arbor

Asset Education is a Suffolk-based trust made up of 14 primary schools, who have been using Arbor since September 2022. We sat down with Sarah Winter, Asset Education’s Director of Operations, to hear about her experience of moving to Arbor from ScholarPack.

Why did you want to move MIS?

It came down to us operating as one trust, not as 14 separate schools. A big part of feeling joined-up as one organisation came from wanting one overarching MIS that the central team and all of our schools could use.

The big issue we had was consistency, because ScholarPack was set up so differently in each school. I’d have to phone each office and get them to send me reports, whereas with Arbor I can get that information for myself. We’re all about saving workload.

For example, with attendance data, I used to have to go into each school, or phone each office. But now, I can easily get the data and analyse it by demographic, by school or by specific groups of children.

What made you choose Arbor?

We looked at several systems, but went for Arbor as it looked more intuitive. Plus, it felt closer to ScholarPack in the way that it did things, so we felt it wouldn’t be a big change for people.

Other systems didn’t quite do what we wanted, or they did, but it wasn’t as easy. Arbor was easiest to navigate and did everything we wanted it to!

Why is consistency important to you as a trust?

As with any trust, it's important to understand what's going on in each of our schools. I have a duty to report to trustees, the DfE and other stakeholders. If we're being absolutely consistent, I know I'm comparing apples and apples, not apples and pears.

It's down to simple things - for example, I had Suffolk Library service contact me to ask about how many children from Ukraine we had at the trust because they were making boxes of resources for them. Previously I'd have had to go through every single school myself, or call all of the headteachers - but it took me five minutes to set up a custom report in Arbor. I could then go back to the library and they sent out all the boxes. It's that capacity it gives us to understand all our schools

What do you like about Arbor?

Consistency

I know that everything's being recorded in the same way at each of our schools. With behaviour, for example, we had 14 different systems in place, and now we have one. I can go onto the central behaviour report and see all the behaviour at all our schools at once.

Trust-wide data

I love having access to trust-wide data, especially with the Custom Report Writer. I've been in meetings where people have asked me for some data and I'm able to create the report there and then in the meeting.

Scheduling reports

I have one custom report on exclusions which I've scheduled to go to the Deputy CEO every day. That's just one example of saving workload, which was really our driving force for moving MIS.

Catering

Having this the same across our systems has saved my office teams a lot of time because we don't have to spend time transferring information from one system to another.

Trust-wide communications

Being able to ping out a text to every parent in the trust is a really useful tool.

Support and feedback

When we have had feedback or needed support, it's easy to speak to Arbor and you feel that they take it on board and work on it.



Has Arbor helped you on your journey to growing your trust?

Yes - we're looking to grow in the next six months. Having moved to Arbor, it means we can bring on a new school, train them up and we're able to take the model from one school to another easily.

If we didn't have Arbor, we would have had to have put a lot more work into making sure everything was set up consistently - Arbor is much more able to use templates so you can focus on training staff and making sure they know how it works.

What advice would you give trusts like you who are thinking about moving from ScholarPack to Arbor?

I would say that change is never easy, and we were coming from a trust where all of our staff really liked ScholarPack. But having gone through the change, our staff can really see how Arbor helps them now. Ultimately ScholarPack wasn't doing what we needed it to as a growing trust.

The other piece of advice would be to invest in training before you start and make sure your staff all understand the reasons for moving. Arbor's intuitive, but it's good to have a solid change management strategy in place to make sure you win hearts and minds as easily as possible.



“Arbor is easier to navigate than ScholarPack and it does everything we wanted it to. It's much more consistent, works better for us at a central level and saves time for our office teams.”

SARAH WINTER, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS AT ASSET EDUCATION