



How a beautiful Infants' and Nursery School in South Oxfordshire made the leap to a new cloud-based MIS, and never looked back



The Background

St Nicholas CE Infants' School is a two form entry Infants' School with Nursery in the beautiful South Oxfordshire town of Wallingford. They provide the highest quality of education to their 192 children, ensuring the best possible outcomes for every individual child. A church school serving the whole community, they have been at the heart of Wallingford life for over fifty years. In April 2018 they joined Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust (ODST) as an Academy – itself founded on a commitment to excellent education for its 6,100 pupils in the Oxford Diocese.

The school recognises the importance of technology, and had selected RM to provide their connectivity and broadband some years ago, but nothing else.

The Challenge

Like many schools, they had used the same Management Information System (MIS) for many years, but it was not up to the challenge that a busy Infants' school required.

"It was clunky, old fashioned and very difficult to navigate. We knew there must be another option, but just didn't know what options were out there. Our original MIS was almost impossible to access remotely – we needed something cloud-based."

Emma Richardson, School Business Manager

The Response

By coincidence, towards the end of 2019, the school attended a third-party training day, and mentioned the challenges they were facing. The trainer – not affiliated to RM in any way – suggested that they may want to consider RM Integris as an alternative MIS, and by December they had signed up for RM Integris, rolling it out across the school during February 2020 half-term.

"We made the switch to RM Integris at just the right time. I just do not know how we would have coped during the Coronavirus lockdown on our old MIS. It was as though we knew that something challenging was coming!"

Emma Richardson, School Business Manager

That said, like all good schools, St Nicholas did look at a number of other options, and whilst cost was important, a cloud-based MIS that would integrate well with other third-party applications were the key decision making features for them.

"When the quote came through from RM Integris – not only did it do what we needed (being cloud-based), but it was cheaper too."

Emma Richardson, School Business Manager



That said, changing MIS is a big decision for any school. For St Nicholas' they were keen to do it before the May Census Day, so that they could run a practice. Whilst the May 2020 Census was ultimately postponed due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the October Census went well, and was well supported remotely by RM.

The school are pleased with the decision they made, but do admit that it has not been without challenges.

"The way the two systems do reporting is different, and RM Integris is going to take some getting used to, but I am pretty sure we will get there. Fortunately the help pages – and RM's helpdesk – have been excellent. The big difference for us is that RM Integris is so much easier for staff to use – especially when working remotely."

Emma Richardson, School Business Manager

Training is an important issue with any change, and St Nicholas CE Infants' School attended a physical training day at RM's main offices in Abingdon. The format of this training is evolving, but the school found it very thorough, even though it did necessitate a lot of pre-work before the day.

St Nicholas used the school website as a way to communicate with parents during the Coronavirus lockdown. The school also continued to operate (staying open for the vulnerable pupils and children of key workers), and so being able to run the school systems remotely – with a cloud-based MIS – was very important.

The Lessons Learnt

- 1. Don't fall for inertia.** As with many things in life, whilst it is easiest to just roll over a contract year after year, sometimes it is worth looking at what else is out there – and that is as true for a school MIS as it is for your car insurance or energy supplier.
- 2. Functionality trumps cost every time.** For something like an MIS, make sure that yours does what you need it to do. If you do not need to access it remotely, then don't look for that, albeit that after what we have just been through most schools probably do need this, more so now than ever.

3.**but you may be surprised by the cost savings out there.** With new technology comes greater efficiencies. Many of the newer MIS's – like RM Integris – are cheaper than the older incumbents – both in immediate licensing costs, but also in on-going maintenance too.
4. **Training is important.** With any change, people need to understand what has changed. Make sure you question your new provider to ensure that you understand what that entails.

The Legacy

The impact of the Coronavirus will have a far reaching impact on everyone – in society, and especially within the education system. For St Nicholas CE Infants' School, they had already made the decision to switch their critical MIS system to the cloud before the virus hit, but many other schools will now be thinking the same thing.

St Nicholas also recognise the importance of technology within schools.

“There is an important bridge between Infants and Juniors, and Primary and Secondary – anything we can do to prepare children earlier for what lies ahead has to be a good thing – and that includes their exposure to technology.”

Emma Richardson, School Business Manager

"Any school who has not reviewed their MIS system for a while should do so now. There are so many other options out there, and you may be pleasantly surprised – both with the functionality and the cost savings you can make."

Emma Richardson, School Business Manager

**Find out more about
RM Integris**

**Visit: rm.com/integris
Email: rmintegris@rm.com
Call: 0800 138 3371**

