

In collaboration we Trust: Partnering with Huish Academy Trust.

In Conversation With



Overview.

Huish Academy Trust is a three-school Multi-Academy Trust located in Somerset. Their vision is to provide a safe, caring, happy and well-ordered environment where everyone's contribution is valued and full potential is realised.

Huish Academy Trust's CFO and Business Manager, Denise Gommo, discusses her experience as a Development Partner with Bromcom and how they have utilised our cloud-based solution over the last year.

Needing a change

We had previously used ESSIMS as our MIS provider. The product was dated in many ways and did not allow us the functionality that we required to progress. It was our intention to collect, manage, and analyse data at Trust level. We could then consolidate this information to better our decision making.

The best of Bromcom

One of the first advantages of our switch to Bromcom was the capacity to export information quickly. Accessing and downloading information in moments gave us an instant snapshot of key metrics across the Trust.

The provision for communication within one system cannot be understated. There is no need to switch between different programmes, meaning messaging is always streamlined.

Bromcom's MCAS (My Child At School) application allows parents visibility of their child's activity at school. They can access live attendance, club availability, school trip information, and school products all from their phone or tablet. This means dialogues between school and home are transparent.

Finally, the ability to link live data to assessment reports in Excel and Power BI is a bonus. Reporting is up-to-date, and we can make strategic decisions promptly. There's no need to wait for data to be manually adjusted.



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Denise Gommo
CFO and Business Manager



A helping hand

Bromcom supported our transition process, allowing a phased approach to give staff the best opportunity to absorb the system instead of cascading lots of new features at once.

Training for staff was available on multiple dates, at several times, and drop-in sessions with advisors were also available.

The Support Team were responsive to our needs.

In 2022, we have moved to direct Bromcom Support, as we are now development partners on both the MIS and MAT Finance. This will mean further integration between the two products and an even more effective offering from Bromcom. We are working alongside Bromcom to move the product forward. They have been receptive and able to provide solutions to queries and questions.

Talking finance

All schools in the Trust were operating SIMS FMS for their finances. In short, this was a 25-year-old product which did not allow for the consolidation of financial data and reporting at a MAT level. A move to a new system was also needed so the Trust could provide data using the DfE's new Chart of Accounts.

After four months or so, we have been able to centralise our purchasing function which has brought about resource and process efficiencies.

Managing money

All schools within the Trust moved from SIMS FMS to Bromcom Academy Finance in April 2021 and then from the latter to MAT Finance in February 2022.

The original iteration of Bromcom MAT Finance was very similar to SIMS which staff liked. It did not overcomplicate processes and offered an easy transition to a new system. Additionally, Bromcom is cloud-based which permitted hybrid or remote working.

MAT Finance gives us the ability to undertake all the financial procedures at an Academy level, while also providing consolidated reporting which is how most of the statutory returns have to be made.

There is the option for automated workflow authorisations, the scanning of all purchasing documents (which is loved by auditors!), and the facilitation of automated returns to the ESFA.

A budgeting tool has also been recently added to the module.



The best of Bromcom (the finance edition)

We are still in the early stages of using Bromcom's MAT Finance solution. However, after four months or so, we have been able to centralise our purchasing function which has brought about resource and process efficiencies. We like being able to scan all our procurement documentation onto the system which saves us time during audit season.

The finance team are also embracing the integration between the Finance and Staffing modules which currently sit within the Bromcom MIS. Consolidated reporting gives the Trust's Senior Leaders and Directors what they require, in the format they need, to make informed decisions.



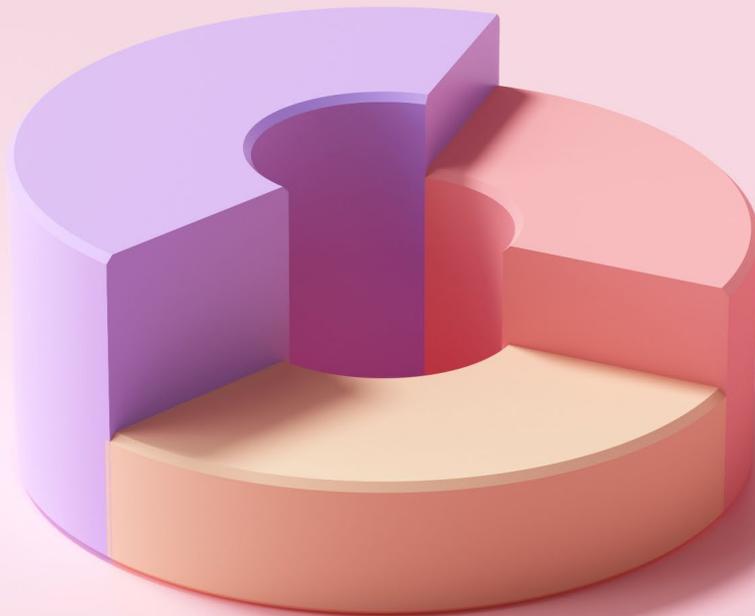
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Creating a winning solution

Making the switch to a new finance system is daunting and not without significant challenge. As well as the operational impact on staff and routines, you have to consider how to handle the whole change process. From a development and transition plan to sometimes daily and weekly dial-ins, Bromcom have provided the support we have needed.

There are certainly times when the process is intense. During these periods, the level of support required naturally escalates and quicker responses are required. As the product is still being developed, these quick solutions were not always available, but Bromcom have been good at listening and understanding issues and offering additional resources to the Trust.





“
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Partnering up

Being a Development Partner requires a lot of hard work and patience as you collaborate to create a product which is fit for purpose now, and for the longer term.

The finance team here at Huish are experienced finance professionals who have put the original product through its paces and suggested ways to improve both operationally and aesthetically. For us, it has been about getting the basics right before we make use of the additional bonus features.

We are looking forward to using these when they arrive!

Worth the hard work!

Our role as Development Partner with Bromcom does add to our workload. However, we know that the product will give us the opportunity to build the much-needed capacity in the team which is needed for the Trust to grow. It has made us think about our priorities, what we do, and why. This reflection is important before we undertake a period of growth.

Growing together

At the time, the Trust really wanted that one system for all its processes. Bromcom Finance centred mostly on maintained school finance but provided the familiarity of SIMS. We worked with the team at Bromcom to develop the product for Academy Finance, and then again for MAT Finance. Now we have a MAT finance solution which is delivering our consolidated data and helping us build the capacity to work smarter and more efficiently.



Book a demo and begin your journey.



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