



SUCCESS STORY

Demographics:

243 Schools
209 primary
34 secondary

80,00 students
10% eligible for
free school meals

15,500 teaching
and support staff

Warwickshire County Council, like many local authorities across the UK, have day-to-day issues relating to data sharing, safeguarding their learners, pupil premium, attendance and school workforce return information, that need to be addressed. In tackling these issues, Warwickshire have managed to streamline their business processes, reducing the need for multiple data entry, saving both time and money in the process. Here is an overview of how they have achieved it so far...

Identity Management

Warwickshire had many disparate systems, each with their own way of data sharing, but none of them joining together. They implemented a solution which not only streamlined the flow of data between systems, but allows them to be in control and manage one data exchange mechanism, rather than many. This has produced major time savings within the local authority, making more **effective use of their reduced resources**. Schools enter their data once into the management information systems, which automatically provisions the accounts for the Learning Platform, curriculum and email for pupils, staff and parents.

Attendance

The main reason for Warwickshire implementing a solution to share attendance data for all off-site learners was to **safe-guard learners**. Throughout the 34 secondary schools, learners typically attend at least one other learning establishment during their secondary education. Warwickshire have implemented a solution that simplifies attendance data entry. Off-site learning establishments no longer have to manually inform the school that a learner is on-site, they can log into a secure, cloud-based system and enter the learners attendance data. This is then seamlessly 'written back' into the schools management information system, which in turn, provides the school with an almost real-time attendance log without the need for csv files and manual data entry.

Warwickshire estimate that approximately 3 work hours, per week, per school is saved dealing with attendance data alone, but that doesn't take into account the intangible benefit of knowing that all learners are safe-guarded when at off-site learning establishments.

Free school meals

Warwickshire has developed a number of **business management improvements** relating to the Free School Meals (FSM) application process. This has been done in close collaboration with the national *connect digitally* programme, with Warwickshire being one of the early adopters of their FSM solution. By using the FSM Eligibility Checking Service (ECS), Warwickshire has reduced the duration of the application process from days or weeks, to seconds in 88% of cases.

Two further areas, which are currently expensive and time-consuming paper processes, are being addressed: automatically updating the school management information system to reflect the eligibility status of pupils on roll; and, automating the update process for records in the FSM system to reflect the movement of pupils between schools, changes of address etc.

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*... the introduction
of the pupil
premium also
increases the
need for accurate
Free School
Meal data...*

For further information,
please visit:
www.sifassociation.org/uk

Approximately 4,500 letters are currently sent out to FSM claimants each year to ensure that up-to-date details are available on their FSM system. The estimated cost of this is £4,800 per annum (staff time, paper and postage). This expense will be eliminated by linking the FSM and schools' management information system. Further savings will be made by removing the need to send paper lists of eligible pupils to schools on a periodic basis.

Time will also be saved in each school by updating the FSM eligibility flag automatically rather than manually. As claimants move in and out of eligibility as their employment status changes, there can be several changes to the eligibility status in a single year. By having an automatic update, it will **reduce the administrative burden** on schools, and also ensure greater accuracy of data. This is particularly important as FSM numbers are a factor in schools formula funding. The introduction of the **pupil premium** also increases the need for accurate FSM data. Looking forward, the project will provide an exemplar that could be applied to other back office systems reliant on accurate data from schools.

Future Plans

Warwickshire has already implemented a data management infrastructure throughout the local authority. Expanding their existing functionality is made considerably easier as they are using the SIF standard, which is not reliant on any supplier or software provider. Never one to sit back and enjoy their current success, Warwickshire is looking to streamline further processes including:

School Workforce: Eliminating the need for duplicate data entry. To complete a School Workforce Census, the current process involves schools recording a host of data in the management information system (including recording Staff Absence in the management information system and in the local authority HR & Payroll system). By utilising and expanding on Warwickshire's current infrastructure, schools will be able to enter the data once in their management information system, safe in the knowledge that this data will automatically populate the local authority HR system - **write once, use many times**.

School Admissions: Warwickshire is looking at streamlining the online school admissions process. Instead of the local authority Admissions Service manually updating addresses and writing to parents, this will be converted to an automatic update - for address, class size information and availability at specific age groups - directly from the school management information system.

All this is made possible by using SIF (Systems Interoperability Framework). SIF provides a platform-independent, supplier-neutral, open data standard which in turn enables true interoperability among data-driven applications within the education sector.

All education establishments can maximise their investment by ensuring interoperability throughout their institutions and therefore reducing redundant data entry.

About the SIF Association

The SIF Association is a unique, non-profit collaboration composed of over 3,200 schools, districts, local authorities, states, US and International Ministries of Education, software suppliers and consultants who collectively define the rules and regulations for educational software interoperability. The SIF Implementation Specification enables diverse applications to interact and share data efficiently, reliably and securely regardless of the platform hosting those applications.

The SIF Association has united these education technology end users and providers in an unprecedented effort to give teachers more time to do what they do best: teach.