



SIMS



**SHARPER
INSIGHT DRIVES
IMPROVEMENT
ACROSS A TRUST**

Cambridge Meridian
Academies Trust

- Informing conversations between heads, executives and trustees
- Greater insight into trust performance
- Bespoke dashboards for a MAT

SIMS CASE STUDY

Establishment Type:

Multi-academy trust

Aim:

To gain insight into performance across the trust using bespoke data reporting.

Solution:

SIMS Consolidated Reporting.

Impact:

SIMS Consolidated Reporting allows CMAT to ask questions of the data about performance, and drill down to individual student level so support can be put in place to improve outcomes.

Background

With six secondary schools and five primaries serving families from small rural villages to inner-city estates, Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust (CMAT) simply can't take a one-size-fits-all approach to monitoring performance.

Since its foundation back in 2011, CMAT has understood that student progress depends on many factors, such as behaviour in the classroom, arriving on time for lessons and a positive attitude to learning. Measuring performance without considering these variables only gives you part of the story.

This was the thinking behind CMAT's decision to gain a clearer picture of how all its schools were performing so it could highlight areas for improvement, and help every student fulfil their potential.

Spotting trends

CMAT wanted to gain a central view of the trust's performance, all in one place. This would give the trust's senior leaders a clearer understanding of the hotspots for issues such as poor attendance or behaviour across the group, and what impact these might be having on students' progress.

One of CMAT's key priorities was to explore the barriers to progress at Key Stage 3. However, without a trust-wide perspective of performance at this level, it was difficult to identify specific issues that might be impeding progress, and take steps to address them.

What the trust needed was a way to drill down into key areas of data across the MAT, and present it in its own format, giving trust leaders the clarity of vision to see what was affecting Key Stage 3 performance.

A tailored solution

It soon became clear that an out-of-the-box system would not fit the bill so CMAT chose SIMS Consolidated Reporting, a solution which exports each school's SIMS data into Microsoft Power BI. The technology enables the trust to carry out detailed analysis of the data from all its schools, spot trends and patterns, and present information in detailed dashboards and reports.

The positive impact of a consolidated picture was immediate, as Andrew Daly, executive principal of CMAT explains. "We had detailed data from each of our schools, but pulling it all together had always been a challenge. We used to spend hours copying it across into a massive spreadsheet, and even then it would be difficult to identify useful information about

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Asking the right questions

Using SIMS Consolidated Reporting, CMAT is able to inform the conversations between its heads, executives and trustees.

“We can use the information at many different levels to ask the trust’s most important questions on what affects performance,” says Andrew. “The data gives us a clear view of Key Stage 3 achievement, and enables us to understand the relationship between students’ attendance, behaviour and progress.”

“If a group of students in one school is not making expected progress in English, for example, we can see whether it’s down to issues such as long periods of absence or low-level classroom disruption. This enables us to pinpoint the issues and make decisions on how best to tackle them.”

“Rather than spending hours poring over demographic data to spot patterns, SIMS Consolidated Reporting enables us to see at a glance who the students are, where their issues lie and we can then deliver the support they need.”

The flexibility of SIMS Consolidated Reporting also allows the MAT to look at wider student development on a whole trust basis. “Having all our SIMS

data in one place means we can set a common benchmark for the way we deliver our character-based education, and the impact this is having on behaviour across the schools.”

Transparency of information

One of CMAT’s key tenets is to create a culture of collaboration. “Every school in the trust has access to the consolidated information,” explains Andrew.

“In the past, this was difficult to achieve as it involved pulling together individual schools’ databases. But with SIMS Consolidated Reporting, we are planning to make our trust-wide data more transparent to the individual schools.

“It allows each school to see how other schools are performing on a departmental basis, so subject leaders can learn from one another. If one school is making great strides in maths, for instance, that school may have advice it can share.

“This cross-trust benchmarking enables us to refine what we cover in the curriculum, identify areas of excellence and make collaborative progress.”

Saving time and money

Not only does CMAT have access to a previously untapped wealth of trust-wide data, it is available in just a few clicks.

“We had two days’ consultancy with SIMS Customer Success Manager,

John Christian. John had the trust up and running with a test database on the first day, and in a very short time we were able to build our own dashboards. The ability to cross-reference data is amazing. “SIMS Consolidated Reporting saves many hours of work, both for trust and school staff. The workload dedicated to collating data is significantly reduced, and we can spend that extra time drilling down and finding ways to support individual students who need additional help.”

As SIMS provides the tools needed to export SIMS data into Power BI free of charge, the only cost involved is the trust’s existing Power BI licenses, eliminating the need for expensive third-party solutions.

Next steps

CMAT is still at the early stages of its consolidated reporting journey, but the trust is already finding ways to get more from its data.

“We are continuing to integrate our financial data in Power BI,” says Andrew. “Having financial information alongside our SIMS data helps the leadership team make informed decisions about resourcing which will benefit the trust as a whole, as well as the individual schools and departments.

“We’re now able to consolidate data from all our secondary academies, and we’ll be expanding this to our primary schools in the next academic year and making more information accessible to more people across the trust. This is key to enabling all our schools to work together to raise aspirations across the trust.”

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