

Griffin Schools Trust

“Strictly Education understands our vision and what makes our family of schools successful. They are genuinely supportive and want our organisation to flourish.”

Overview

Griffin Schools Trust was founded a decade ago by a group of experienced educationalists who took on a small portfolio of schools needing improvement.

Now headquartered in Bromley, Kent, GST has since then grown to 12 primary and secondary schools across the Midlands and the South East – 11 of them now graded good or outstanding by Ofsted.

GST’s CEO Anne Powell began working with Strictly Education as head of one of the schools – in Waltham Forest – and was so impressed by their HR services that more schools started to procure their services.

Strictly Education’s support has changed and developed as GST has expanded. “Our schools have always been spread over a number of different local authorities in different geographic regions of the country so some sort of standardisation across our schools in HR processes has been important, even though we want our schools to maintain their individuality and autonomy in other areas,” explains Anne.

“We’ve always been a head-led trust, but HR was one of the first things that we agreed we needed to align on. It was that need to have shared processes, common practices, and then to move from the reactionary to the developmental.”



The response

At the beginning of GST all schools had different HR contracts, or no HR contract. “It was the same with everything: payroll, finance systems, school operations – every system you might expect to find in a school, we had a different version of it across our portfolio of schools,” says Anne.

That development over the years – GST now has more than 700 staff – means that while recruitment never stops, GST now sees its HR services as being focused on people strategy, getting the best out its current staff and ensuring that the trust’s people needs can be met in the future.

The focus now is freeing up GST’s leaders to focus on providing excellent opportunities to pupils by making HR and other back-office processes simpler and more streamlined. Strictly Education has played an instrumental part in this.

That relationship has encouraged the development of HR strategy at GST, says Anne; rather than solving problems Strictly Education expertise is being used to equip the GST back-office team with the skills that they can then go away and use.

The response (continued)

“The relationship has gone from calling on Strictly Education’s HR consultants when we had an HR issue or a question to accessing the whole suite of HR resources and services that Strictly Education offers. So, our operations teams are now more likely to be using the Strictly HR resources hub and access the webinars or training modules.”

One of those training modules focused on developing people strategies and recruitment strategies. The session provided valuable guidance for GST on developing their people from apprenticeships through the headteacher level and beyond.



GST also relies on Strictly for updates on legislation changes. “Leaders don’t have the time to read every new HR directive so we rely on Strictly for that expertise which we may not have as educators.”

HR troubleshooting will however continue to be a key part of Strictly Education’s support for GST. “Obviously there are always HR issues that need to be resolved. These have reduced considerably over the last few years as we’ve become a more mature organisation, but there will always be a case where a colleague will be faced with an issue or question that’s not arisen before, and Strictly Education’s team always has the capacity to help.”

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Anne Powell,
Chief Executive Officer

The result

It is difficult to accurately estimate the impact that Strictly Education’s HR support services and advice have had at GST given the trust’s gradual development over the years – taking on different schools in a range of different contexts with very different challenges, against a backdrop of a changing conditions in the sector as a whole – but Anne believes that the partnership with Strictly Education has helped to promote retention and, most importantly, support and stimulate a culture of people development across the trust.

“We are always thinking about how we can be more proactive with our teams, supporting and

developing people to progress their careers,” she says. “We’re now training up new leaders to have this approach so they can identify and develop the next generation of leaders, and we track their progress meticulously, always looking at how we can develop our talent pipeline by providing people with great developmental opportunities.”

She adds: “Having better systems, processes and support in areas like HR has helped us to become a more mature organisation, with a strong infrastructure, and that has also helped our pupil strategy.”

The verdict

Strictly Education feels like part of our back-office," says Anne. "The service and support they give us isn't one size fits all; they have taken time to build up a deep understanding of who we are, what we do and where we want to go. That makes it very personal.

"One great aspect of working with the Strictly Education team is that they do understand our vision and what we are trying to achieve.

Leadership in the education sector can be challenging, and we find that Strictly Education is understanding and supportive and not judgmental of the situations that we're in. They are genuinely supportive and want our organisation to flourish."



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We strive to deliver excellent services

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