

Case Study 4:

Saving Money with a School Purchasing Assessment

The focus on how effective schools use their funding has never been greater. Jamie Oliver's crusade around how much is spent on school dinners opened the floodgates for all areas of school's purchasing to be subject to scrutiny. Schools are now under pressure from all angles to demonstrate how effectively they are using their funds to provide the best learning environment for their pupils.



This has recently been made a much more difficult task in Cambridgeshire, as schools, having been given their own budget many years ago, face further financial challenges as restrictions as to how they operate and manage their finances are lifted. Management of their own bank accounts will be in place by March 2008 in all Cambridgeshire schools. This change means that schools must be even more aware of the importance of good financial management and the role that procurement can play in achieving savings and being more efficient.

To assist schools to identify areas where savings can be made in terms of procurement and contract management, PASS have designed a simple assessment tool. This combines a self-assessment form with a follow-up visit from a member of the PASS team. By completing the pre-visit self-assessment, PASS are able to research the types of contracts that the school has in place before the visit, making the impact of the assessment that much greater.



Following a recent assessment the Head teacher of Winhills Primary School in St Neots said:

"We asked PASS to undertake an assessment on our school, hoping that they would find us the additional £1000 we needed to buy new books for our school nursery library – money that was

not in our budget.

“The first step we had to take was to provide PASS with information on what we buy, what suppliers we use, what contracts we have in place and the costs of what we buy. We thought this would be a big task, but it was surprisingly easy – we were worried that the information would be in too much of a mess for them to make use of, but this proved not to be the case.



“Within a fortnight, PASS came back to us to say they had identified a number of areas that they could investigate with us. We arranged a date for the PASS Schools Purchasing Officer to come to visit, and she went through all our records. By the end of the month, we had received a final report that set out very simply the steps we should take – to release over £2,000 of savings! We were delighted with the outcome, and would recommend the Assessment to any school.”

“We were certainly delighted with the outcome of the school procurement review undertaken by PASS. We found it very useful to have an external view of our purchasing processes and the contracts we currently have with a range of suppliers.

As every penny counts in the Winhills budget, we found it very useful to have PASS identify areas where we could make savings. These seem very practical recommendations and we shall start implementation them as soon as possible – saving over £2,000 a year will bring significant benefits to the pupils and staff at Winhills.”

Governor, Winhills Primary School,
Cambridgeshire



The savings generated by Cambridgeshire’s unique approach have been in the region of 2.5% of procurement spend per school, thus the assessment can identify sufficient savings to enable schools to meet their Efficiency targets.

For more information contact Rachel Wood, Beacon Coordinator
Tel No: 01223 717047 email Rachel.Wood@cambridgeshire.gov.uk