



How Portway Junior School went paperless and automated all its processes in one place, giving staff their time back, improving duty-of-care and engaging parents.

Portway Junior School

Portway Junior School is a Primary School located in Derby, England. Part of the Odyssey Collaborative Trust, Portway's mission and School Development Plan aim to create opportunities and experiences for its pupils that raise aspirations and provide a lifelong love of learning.

To achieve these outcomes, high rates of parent engagement and student participation – across a wide range of academic and cultural educational experiences – is paramount. However, with disconnected, manual and paper-based methods of communication, information distribution and collection, parents and staff alike were finding the repetitive avalanche of paper difficult to manage.

Adey Greaves, School Business Manager and Chief Operations Officer of the Odyssey Collaborative Trust, shared Portway Junior School's process automation journey – from paperwork calamity to Operoo.



The Challenge

Portway's processes were almost entirely paper-based. The manual, repetitive and disconnected nature of these processes – from distributing and collecting forms, consent or requests for information – was weighing heavy on staff and parents.



The Solution

Portway needed to reduce its dependence on costly, time-consuming and unreliable paper-based means of operation, while streamlining and digitising all its school processes in one trackable, trustworthy system.



The Results

Portway is now completely paper free. Its processes are all automated, integrated and governed through Operoo, with 100% of staff and parents embracing the platform. Forms are returned within hours, and parents are more engaged than ever before.



The Challenge

Overcoming the paperwork tsunami

Portway had a problem. As a sizable junior school of some 360 pupils – with a strong curriculum of events, activities and desire for student inclusion – there was a lot of paperwork for both staff and parents to complete.

The manual, repetitive nature of those paper-based processes was inefficient. Adey Greaves knew the school community could better spend its day-to-day efforts on ongoing pupil development and educational outcomes.

“We had an almost entirely paper-based method of operating,” said Greaves. “It felt like we were always sending out another paper form – be it consent or approval, requests for information such as updated student medical information, or surveys.

“The repetitiveness had started to be a drain on resources at the school; particularly for admin staff. Teachers and parents were spending too long chasing kids for forms that they’d lost, forgotten to return, or simply left at the bottom of their school bags all term.”

Additionally, the manual nature of these predominantly paper processes meant that there was no cohesion and traceability, which only added to the workload.

“Because these practices of information dissemination and collection weren’t connected and consistent, confirming receipt and validating data was also time-consuming,” said Greaves.

“Chasing overdue or missing information and permissions was also manual, and fraught with the same challenges.

“For example, if we hadn’t received parental consent for a school trip, we had a text message system we could use to chase some parents – but that was it. And, it wasn’t part of an official or integrated process either.”

Greaves knew Portway Junior School needed a way of systemizing these routine processes, which also “put the onus on the adults, not the kids”.

“*I knew we could become far more efficient and reduce our papertrail significantly,” said Greaves. “But, we just weren’t sure how – we’d never seen a solution that could meet all our needs, while integrating with our Student Information System and staff cohort.*”

“Then, I was at a conference one day, and read the preamble for one of the event sponsors. I’d never heard of a solution quite like it, and simply had to investigate further.”

That solution was Operoo.

The Solution

Digitising and integrating everything

Not only did Operoo’s School Process Automation Platform allow Portway Junior School to reduce its dependence on costly, time-consuming and unreliable paper-based means of operation, it also brought everything together in one trackable digital system.

“*Operoo came across as a unique product,” said Greaves. “The ability for it to integrate with our people, existing ways of working and technology was critical.*”

“Eliminating repetitive tasks by automating paper processes into digital workflows – such as distributing and collecting consent forms, approval requests and medical data – was only the first part of the challenge.”

Operoo also works alongside and complements Portway Junior School’s other IT solutions. For example, Operoo is fully-integrated with its



Student Information System (SIS), Integris.

"Using Wonde as an integration point between the two platforms, we're able to push information from Integris to Operoo," said Greaves. "So when parents respond directly to digital forms, consent or information requests through Operoo, we know we can rely on Operoo as that verified single source of truth. This is particularly crucial when validating or updating student medical profiles and action plans."

Additionally, Greaves said Operoo worked well alongside other applications, such as Parent Hub.

"Operoo is at the centre of how we work now, with all our processes done through the platform," said Greaves. "But, we've also been able to establish good practices for linking other applications to our new Operoo-centric way of operating."

"For instance, we have an app called Parent Hub, which we use to send short form messages to parents. We now essentially use Parent Hub as an additional follow-up method to remind people to complete forms and processes in Operoo."

But above all, Greaves emphasized Operoo's ability to integrate with Portway's biggest asset of all – its people.

"Operoo's usability means it's integrated well with our human resources too," said Greaves. "The staff get on really well with the product, which is vital to the success of Operoo and the digital transformation of our processes. Afterall, you can automate anything you like, but if people don't embrace the technology used to do it, why bother?"

The Results

No paper, one source of truth

Ultimately, Portway Junior School has moved from a disparate, manual and paper-based way of communicating, requesting and receiving information from parents and staff, to completely digitised workflows that are governed by a single process automation platform.

In doing so, Portway has eliminated the strain of adhering to repetitive, error-prone tasks on both staff and parents. It's also drastically increased the efficiency of its operations, while removing the unreliability of paper and junior-school-aged students from its processes.

"There's no scattered papertrail to track down and verify; it's all right there," said Greaves. "We don't use paper at all anymore. We've installed Operoo for all our forms and processes, integrated it with our SIS, and found it to be a really, really great system to use. We love it."

"Now, authorised staff have access to the same, up-to-date information, at all times, from any device – even when offline. While we've now got efficiency of process and accuracy of information, we also have anytime, anywhere access too. That's key when it comes to student medical information. We can better-manage our duty-of-care obligations, and know exactly what to do and who to call in an emergency – be it on campus or during an excursion."

While all 37 of Portway Junior's staff have adopted Operoo, paper headaches are a thing of the past for the broader school community too. Parents can give consent, respond to forms or verify medical information from their phone with a swipe of a finger. Importantly, they also have equal opportunity to respond.



"The parent community is invested in the new processes and is more engaged than ever before," said Greaves. "All parents of our 360 students have completed Operoo profiles for their children. Because we know that all parents receive the same information at the same time, everyone now has equal opportunity to read, respond and engage with notifications, meaning students also have the chance to participate more fully in school life."

"We're receiving higher response rates, in less time, across the board. For example, we recently sent out a survey to all parents. We sent it out through Operoo at 9am, had 60 responses by 10am, and 124 responses within 24-hours. In fact, people are more likely to respond in general, with 90 percent of surveys returned by the end of the week. Those numbers dwarf anything we've achieved with paper equivalents."

"Just yesterday, we sent out a trip form to parents of a class of 30. We've already had 22 responses. And, when parents return those trip consent forms, we know they've also confirmed or updated their child's medical profile."

"We simply don't have to chase or worry about these things anymore – Operoo's doing that for us."

While undertaking such significant change to school processes and parent communication was no mean feat, Greaves said Operoo worked hard to resolve any challenges and ensure a strong outcome.

"Working with Operoo has been great," said Greaves. "In particular, we're finding the support we're receiving is second to none – from setting things up, to answering our ongoing questions."

"There's always somebody who responds on Operoo's online chat, and our account manager Amanda always follows-up, be it by email or phone. With Operoo, I know that someone will always get back to me."

"We're really, really impressed with it; really pleased. We're hoping to roll Operoo out across the Trust."



360 / 360

EVERY STUDENT HAS A OPEROO PROFILE



PAPER FREE THANKS
TO OPEROO

37 / 37

ALL STAFF HAVE ADOPTED OPEROO