



Newton International School, Doha



BlueSky Education boosts staff engagement with appraisal and professional development to enhance teaching quality

About the school

Newton International School is a British International School based in Doha, Qatar, established in 2007, with both British Schools Overseas and Qatar National Schools Accreditation. The student body comprises over 1000 students from over 100 different nationalities, across Foundation One to Year Eight. The school teaches the English National Curriculum alongside the Qatar National Curriculum.

Key takeaways

- Move from paper to an online system improves oversight of the appraisal process
- Staff are able to define their own learning journey with personalised professional development through BlueSky Learning
- Quality assurance practices are more efficient and consistent, while workload is shared across the team

“ BlueSky is helping us to shift our appraisal practice towards a more developmental approach – we want to help people to achieve their career goals, develop their teaching ability and knowledge. With BlueSky you can see how different processes are affecting outcomes and see what is working or needs improvement. More than anything, having a clear picture of how our school is progressing against our objectives is extremely beneficial. ”



Sónia Santos, Year 6 Team Leader and Appraisal Coordinator, Newton International School, Doha

What was the challenge?

The school, which aims to teach the British curriculum to British standards, employs a large body of staff from various countries around the world. With pressure to deliver a high-quality education in a highly competitive international school market, the school set out to improve teaching standards across the staff body.

Prior to joining BlueSky Education, the school had been using a paper-based system to manage appraisal and professional learning. This created a heavy burden of admin tasks to collate data and identify training needs.

Sónia Santos, Year 5 Team Leader and Appraisal Coordinator explains: "Unless you took the time to look at the paperwork in detail, it was difficult to get a clear picture of where staff needed to improve their knowledge or develop teaching skills. With over 125 staff, many of whom only stay for a couple of years, it was very hard to keep

track of progress against the standards we expected".

School leaders wanted to introduce a mentoring approach to appraisal and professional learning that would support staff in developing their skills. They realised that they would need a tool that supported ongoing dialogue, while also linking progress with quality assurance processes, so that individuals and managers could track progress towards professional objectives.

"Previously appraisal was happening, and reviews and observations were recorded, but then we moved on to the next thing without a clear learning objective. It was really important for us to bring in a clear process that would help us track development over time," says Sónia. "When we heard about BlueSky we realised it could be the solution. It has already had a significant impact on teacher development and we are really happy with the results."

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How is BlueSky supporting the school?

In addition to using BlueSky Education to manage appraisal processes such as objective setting, performance reviews and quality assurance, Newton International School has subscribed to BlueSky Learning, BlueSky's flexible online continued professional development library.

"We ran a survey of staff in February which uncovered how staff felt about our previous CPD provision; although the CPD provided was relevant to staff, they felt that they should be allowed to procure other CPD that was more relevant to their training needs and to achieving their objectives." Sónia says. "This led to us subscribing to BlueSky Learning, as this allows staff to select the learning content they feel will support their personal development."

Like many international schools, recruiting and retaining high quality staff is a top priority for Newton International School. Sónia believes by allowing staff to take greater ownership of their learning pathways, BlueSky Learning has already changed the school's approach to training: "Instead of having a one-size-fits-all approach to CPD, staff can choose their own development path to improve

skills in particular areas that they need. Staff are now actively engaged with their own performance appraisal and professional development on an ongoing basis, which previously only concerned the senior leadership team."

Staff use the CPD module in BlueSky Education to keep a record of all CPD activities that they undertake, and these can be linked to appraisal objectives, as well as contributing to the school's strategic improvement plan. The school leadership team can track progress and evaluate the impact on teaching quality across all staff.

BlueSky's Customer Success team helped to set up the school's appraisal and quality assurance processes with bespoke forms for lesson observations, learning walks and book scrutiny. Sónia was impressed with BlueSky's expertise in education standards, as it was essential to ensure that Newton's process was aligned with current best practice in the UK: "The support to ensure this was correctly set up was excellent. This has already helped us to prepare reports for school inspectors that demonstrated how the school is meeting British standards of education and training for staff."

What is the impact?

"Through BlueSky's helpful reports, we can identify members of staff who needed additional training and improvement and organise support ahead of our inspection in the Spring. Using BlueSky streamlined the process because we could collate all of the data for all staff much more easily. The reports also provide granular assessment of how staff are progressing against the teachers' standards" explains Sónia.

Implementing BlueSky Education has influenced how the school structures line management, expanding the responsibilities of middle managers. For example, heads of year or department are now trained to perform quality assurance processes like learning walks, peer observations

and moderations (such as Writing and Reading reviews) says Sónia. "At the end of the day, all team leaders should know how the teachers in their teams work and be able to assess the quality of teaching effectively. With BlueSky we can clearly define what good practice looks like, and transparently set expectations."

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“ Now all of our staff appraisal is documented in BlueSky Education, we can run reports that give a clear picture of development needs across the whole school. Team leaders can run their own reports to identify areas for development in their teams and offer support to improve subject knowledge or close gaps in skills, such as around behaviour management and assessment of learning. ”



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