

CASE STUDY



Ballymacash Primary School sits on the edge of the suburbs in Lisburn around ten miles south of the Belfast, with just under 400 primary aged children and another 52 in the nursery.

BACKGROUND

As Principal at Ballymacash, Stephen Grey deals in all aspects of school life.

"Some mornings you could see me on the road as the lollipop man and then covering a class when somebody isn't in. There are different meetings throughout the day, or I could be looking after maintenance of the building. No two days are ever the same!"

Almost two years ago, Stephen started thinking about the amount of money going through the school each year and the amount of time being spent dealing with it.

DIFFICULTIES

Teachers would find themselves collecting and recording money for dinners and trips which could take 20-25 minutes of classroom teaching on a Monday morning. There was then the office time of collecting it all up and the added time of somebody having to take it to the bank where they were paying £600-700 in bank fees a year.

Ballymacash were already big users of Teachers2Parents, using it to send text messages to parents about all aspects of school life. After considering a range of parental payment options, the school decided to trial T2P's sister product SchoolMoney to handle cashless payments across the school.

SOLUTION

After taking on a trial of SchoolMoney, Stephen fully committed to the process by ensuring his staff were well looked after and supported, and that parents received regular encouragement. Overall, this meant they were able to make the transition in just a few months.

"We started with trips before moving dinners over to cashless" says Stephen, explaining their process. "We did dinners in four phases to help our office get their heads around it, starting with year 1 and then moving through the other year groups. We started the process at the February half term and had everybody switched over by the end of May."

The impact was immediate, particularly the change in classrooms on a Monday morning.



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“Monday mornings are completely different now – we can get children straight into their work. We only go to the bank once every six weeks now to deposit charity collections. It has massively cut down the cost of admin time.”

Another bonus has been the ease with which payments can be tracked, leading to fewer payments being written off. “Parents usually have a lot of payments to make around September, and the system helps them spread payments for bigger trips over a year” Stephen notes.

The implementation has been so successful that Ballymacash have even been approached by other schools to find out what they’ve been doing. Stephen’s advice to them is always to “take a look at what other schools are doing and consider the pace they work at”, but most importantly to take an “all or nothing” approach to implementation.

And on the odd occasion when they themselves have needed help from the SchoolMoney team?

“The support line is fabulous, no matter what the issue is we lift the phone and they’re brilliant.

“I don’t want to go back to paper as it would be a step back for all of us. Where we are now, everything runs like clockwork. If you were to tell me that in September we were going back to paper, I would be devastated!”

