

International School
Doha College, Qatar



One of Qatar's leading schools captures the quality and breadth of performance development

Brilliant support service made adopting BlueSky easy for staff and managers

About the school

Doha College is one of the world's leading British International Schools, with an outstanding reputation for academic achievement, and is the leading British curriculum international school in Doha, Qatar, based on examination results. Some 2,500 students aged 3 - 18 of more than 70 nationalities attend the school, making it a truly global community.

The school has pioneered High Performance Learning, a pedagogy focussed on developing a superior cognitive performance in students and its track record of educational excellence is based on firmly embedded values, a passion for learning, and an international environment which inspires through its sheer diversity.

What were the challenges?

In 2015, the school relied on a paper-based system for managing performance development, meaning documents were printed out multiple times and distributed, collected and filed by hand. As the school expanded from a two-form to a six-form entry in Primary, this paper system became unwieldy and it was far too easy for documents to go astray.

At the same time, they were keen to introduce a more bottom-up approach to professional development, giving more responsibility to staff to take charge of their own learning and enabling managers to map targets for individuals to the school development plan, and to the school's bespoke professional standards.

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Uzma Zaffar, Vice Principal - Quality Assurance
at Doha College in Qatar.

“The whole system is so easy, and can be bespoke. I want to ensure we are making maximum use of BlueSky.”

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Keeping up with best practice in the UK was also a concern. There was a feeling that the school risked missing out on new thinking around professional learning, and the technologies to implement them that were emerging there and in other countries.

BlueSky was introduced later that year and has been rolled out across the whole school with all staff, teaching and support services staff, now using it to log their professional development.

School development plan objectives are on BlueSky and when staff set their targets for the year, they link them to the plan.

“When they undertake any training or CPD, staff identify which objectives it links to and it is then recorded on BlueSky,” says Uzma Zaffar, Vice Principal - Quality Assurance. “In the last year, in-house training and development opportunities have been uploaded to BlueSky for all staff to access and book.”

A key issue was staff omitting to log any internal training they had undertaken.

“We offer so much for staff development but none of it was being recorded as evidence by staff who did it. Now, once they request training it is logged. We run weekly teaching and learning forums for primary and secondary, for example, which are attended by many staff and count as CPD, so now they are advertised and booked on BlueSky.”

“The extensive support BlueSky offers was key to embedding the system across the school,” she adds.

“The support service is brilliant and help is instant so if you email with a query, it is answered within an hour. What’s also very good is the continuity. We have dealt with the same person from the beginning, he knows our system really well, knows exactly what we need and how we need it.”

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How is BlueSky supporting Doha College?

By enabling staff to log every event, the system has helped managers to capture the full extent of staff development activity. Uzma says, “In the past, CPD has been understood to mean getting on a plane to go somewhere else for a conference or training course because there is a limited amount available in Qatar. But CPD is not just about going on a course. It’s an article you’ve read, it is talking to or observing colleagues too.”

“Inspectors are also very interested to see evidence of CPD and performance development and they are impressed when I can show them the nature and breadth of what we do and how it is all recorded onto the system. Inspectors from the UK really like it.”

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What is the impact?

For managers, the system enables them to gain a full picture of development and progress for all staff and how their development is helping the school to meet its objectives, which then informs individual appraisals as well as planning for the following year.

The fact that staff who leave can take their BlueSky portfolio with them is another major benefit.

“As an International School our staff move around, so being able to download your portfolio and take it with you to your next role is seen as very valuable by staff. And it works the other way - some staff arrive with a BlueSky portfolio which they continue to build on seamlessly once they start with us, there is no paper to chase or reformatting from another system to do.”

What’s next?

Doha College has moved to a new, purpose built school which will offer a six-form entry primary and ten-form entry secondary school at full capacity.

“With a school of this size we will definitely need to make even more use of BlueSky,” Uzma says. “We’re looking at adopting the self-evaluation element and also exploring how we can use it to support our school development plan. We have a three-year planning cycle and are in the second year of it. Putting the whole plan on to BlueSky for everyone to see and refer back to would make the process much more efficient and make the plan ever more meaningful.”

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