

## HeadteacherChat's Review of *BlueSky Education*

Read the full review below...

How does *BlueSky Education* describe their product?

“*BlueSky Education's* award-winning platform allows schools to triangulate appraisal, continued professional development and school quality assurance processes, tailored to your organisation's culture. Progress is easily evaluated, while staff are engaged through a rich, ongoing professional dialogue.

It is the leading online solution of its kind – developed by a former school leader who recognised the need for a platform that enabled schools to link performance management with professional learning and quality assurance processes.

*BlueSky Education* allows schools to design a tailored approach to teacher appraisal that aligns with the culture of the organisation, whether the school uses annual performance reviews or a continuous professional dialogue throughout the cycle. The flexible platform allows staff to align their own professional objectives to school and trust priorities and encourages an open and continuous dialogue with their coach or manager.”

A survey of clients found that *BlueSky Education* saves the SLT around 5 hours a week on administrating appraisal, professional development and quality assurance. The online solution not only significantly streamlines these processes, it makes it possible to draw links between them, for example ensuring that appraisal targets are linked to relevant professional learning, and the impact of development can be evaluated through quality assurance activities such as observation of learning visits. SLT can quickly review automatically-created intelligence for whole-school or individual progress toward school priorities.



Every staff member in a school can have their own personal portfolio which means everyone is treated equally, and gets the benefit of a clear and consistent appraisal process. Using the online portal encourages school staff to stay engaged with appraisal objectives as they can refer back to them and document any progress at any time, as well as requesting and receiving profession learning. This means when it comes to review meetings, all the evidence is already there, helping to relieve the stress of appraisal and keep it focused on the future.

Keeping staff engaged in professional development has a positive effect on job satisfaction and staff retention, as well as supporting school improvement. The platform is highly flexible, so schools can easily change the terminology to fit their culture or add their own bespoke proformas and adapt the platform to match their process.

*BlueSky* works with key sector partners such as ASCL, CST and ISBL to ensure the solution is on top of government policy and the platform allows schools to review staff against the latest Teachers' standards as well as other relevant professional standards, including criteria from international school associations such as COBIS and High Performance Learning."

**What does it enable you to do?**

BlueSky Education’s platform allows the whole process of appraisals, performance reviews, CPD and school improvement to be managed as one entity in a proactive, 2-way process. Traditional performance management discussions are replaced with a developmental conversational approach. This starts with each member of staff completing a self-review exercise, which takes about 30 minutes and is based on the teacher standards. This provides a great opportunity for staff to reflect, providing a good starting point for the discussion. Progress can easily be uploaded throughout the year, creating an ongoing record of development, rather than a potentially rushed, retrospective gathering of evidence just for an annual discussion.

### Example of a Teacher Pedagogical Review



A central part of BlueSky Education’s ethos is based on providing equal opportunities to ALL staff, so that, for example, Midday Supervisors, Business Leadership and Site managers’ appraisal is conducted in exactly the same way as teachers, senior leaders and CEOs. They believe this promotes a forward-looking, ongoing cycle of collaborative growth within the school.

Schools can tap into *BlueSky Education's* CPD platform (*BlueSky Learning*) – bitesize, practitioner-led, research-based professional learning modules which can enhance the school CPD programme. Individuals can select, access and complete modules at their own pace and these are recorded in their individual CPD record. Alternatively, the videos can be used in whole staff meetings to initiate discussions around a particular topic.

For leaders, the platform efficiently links the progress and actions of individuals to the school improvement plan. Leaders can select one particular whole-school objective and produce reports to show all the actions completed in that area by ALL school staff, therefore triangulating evidence and showing how staff are collaborating. This is particularly useful for governors and trustees when monitoring and evaluating school-wide growth.

### *School objectives and evidence in one report*

**Targets Report** [Print] [Export as CSV] [Refresh Data]

- Report Created by: Lilly Leader
- Date field: Date Set
- Start date: 01 Sep 2022
- End date: 31 Aug 2023
- Grouped By: User
- Approval Status: All
- Quality of Education:
  - Ensure that there is a clear and coherent rationale for curriculum design which is shared across the school and fully understood by all
  - Ensure that the curriculum is successfully implemented to ensure pupils' progression in knowledge especially through the use of retrieval strategies.

User: Adam Alphabet

User's Name	Target	Agreed Completion Date	What will success look like?	Actions	Professional Development	Approved?
Adam Alphabet	Goal 1 - Lead a research based review of learning to strengthen middle leadership accountability for excellence in the Quality of Education.	30 Aug 2023	- Professional Learning Research Hub is accessible to all staff (through BlueSky Resources area) - New self-evaluation tools (i.e. templates) to monitor the implementation of the curriculum and to develop best practice through coaching are ready for September 2021 - Training programme for middle leaders is scheduled and accessible to all staff but compulsory for middle leaders	- Create Professional Learning Research Hub in resources area - Set up a learning visit proforma and coaching proforma in BlueSky - Schedule training sessions in BlueSky, Roadfill to middle leaders and make available to join for other staff	Commit to ongoing renewal of BlueSky as this is central to this strategy	Yes
Adam Alphabet	Goal 3 - Develop a range of assessment strategies in my own practice to reinforce learning through retrieval and application of learned knowledge.	30 Aug 2023	Schemes of learning and associated lesson planning will be revised to reflect new strategies Pupils recall will improve as shown in end of topic assessments	- Review the research on the role of memory and retrieval in learning - Research the most effective strategies to apply to own classroom activities - Update schemes of learning - Participate in coaching programme	Metacognition CPD	Yes

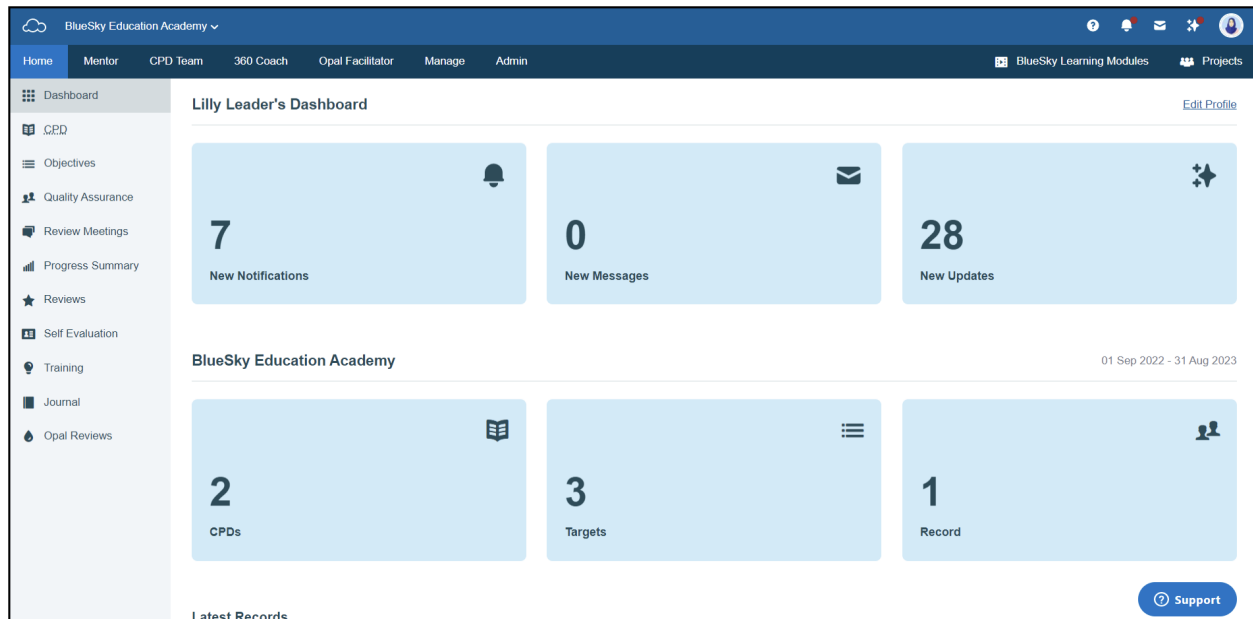
Leaders receive just one email a day listing any actions, requests for training etc., meaning that they are kept informed of updates yet not inundated with notifications unnecessarily.

An important element of the platform is that certain terminology used within it can be adapted according to the school's culture, therefore terms such as 'lesson

observations' and 'coaching' which can be interpreted in multiple ways, can be replaced with a school's preferred vocabulary.

*BlueSky Education* describes how schools across a Trust can use the platform to create a holistic perspective of talent across multiple schools, utilising internal best practice and expertise.

*Leaders' dashboard showing daily actions in school*



Pricing starts from £350/year for *BlueSky Education* (for a small school). An 'unlimited' annual subscription to *BlueSky Learning* can be purchased separately or at a reduced rate when purchased with *BlueSky Education*.

### What are the benefits of using BlueSky Education?

- Puts people at the centre of conversations about professional objectives and development.
- Ensures everyone's development priorities link to the organisation's strategic priorities as they thread through all elements of the software.
- Targets professional learning to build capacity and improve retention, providing individuals with the tools to take ownership of their own development.
- Guarantees value for money by providing the information you need to evaluate the short and long-term impact of CPD.

### **Testimonials:**

*“With BlueSky everyone’s got the same entitlement, everyone’s getting the same experience. BlueSky gives us parity, clarity and consistency for all staff.”*

Deb Poole, Director of Staff Development, City Learning Trust

*“I absolutely recommend BlueSky. It is a solution to achieving consistency across a trust and is a universal tool that can be used in so many different ways to support school improvement and development, which ultimately has a positive impact on student outcomes.”*

Catherine Taylor, School Improvement Partner, Advance Learning Partnership

Find out more:

BlueSky Education: Engage and develop your people aligned to strategic goals

<https://youtu.be/LRGR2hT5YKQ>

**In summary, HeadteacherChat recommends BlueSky Education because:**

‘BlueSky Education’s approach to professional development empowers individuals to take ownership of their own development, and enables leaders to focus on building capacity and improving retention, alongside achieving their strategic goals.’

Lucy Coy, CEO. February 2023