



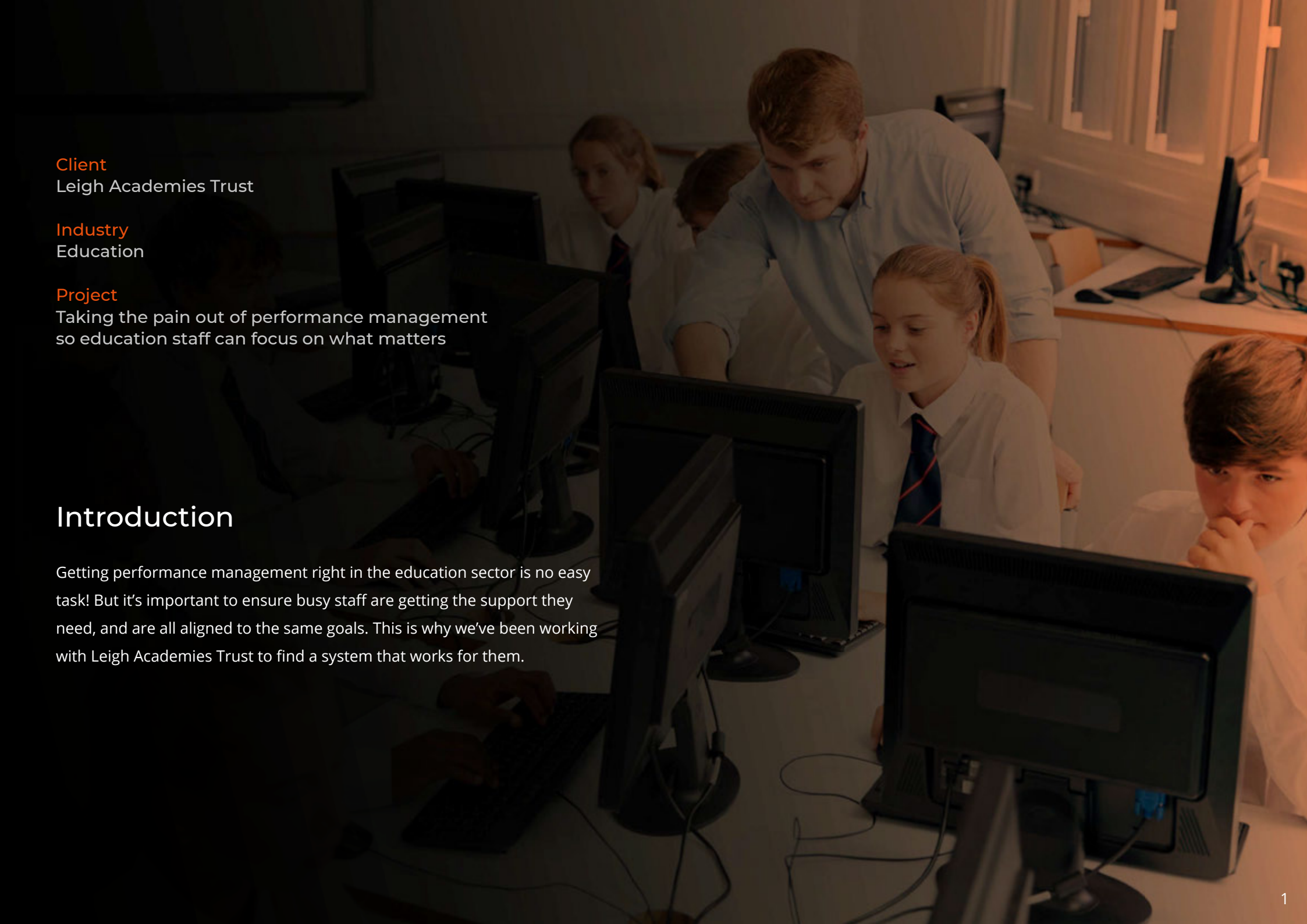
# Education

Leigh Academies Trust's journey to painless performance management



CASE STUDY



A photograph of a classroom or computer lab. A male teacher in a light blue shirt is leaning over a desk, pointing at a computer monitor. A female student in a white school uniform and tie is looking at the monitor. Another student is visible in the background, also at a computer. The room has several computer workstations with monitors and keyboards. The lighting is warm and focused on the students and teacher.

**Client**  
Leigh Academies Trust

**Industry**  
Education

**Project**  
Taking the pain out of performance management  
so education staff can focus on what matters

## Introduction

Getting performance management right in the education sector is no easy task! But it's important to ensure busy staff are getting the support they need, and are all aligned to the same goals. This is why we've been working with Leigh Academies Trust to find a system that works for them.

## Background


The education sector presents some unique issues when it comes to effective performance management of employees. Having to consider both teaching and support staff, being on a tight budget and of course the time constraints that people in education face, makes this a complicated task.

No one knows this better than Richard Taylor of Leigh Academies Trust. Richard joined the trust in 2014 after having worked in a number of different sectors. When he began the trust was comprised of 6 schools, now it has grown to 31 schools based in the Kent, Medway and South East London areas, providing high-quality educational opportunities around 19,000 learners aged 2 months to 19 years.

Richard explains that when he first joined the Trust there was limited HR function, and he was keen to get a first rate system in place to support staff across the trust and get performance management to a high standard.

He tells us that the trust is now progressive in terms of performance management and HR software in comparison to its peers. Getting to this point began in 2017, when the trust reviewed performance management, and decided to change and be the first in the sector to do performance management on a continuous model, rather than evaluations annually, in order to support staff all year round. But in order to do this well they needed software to help them, this is where Advanced Clear Review came in.





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**Richard Taylor**  
Leigh Academies Trust

## First impressions

Richard's first impressions of Clear Review were very good, he told us "My first thoughts were that this is exactly how I would design a performance management system given the chance, it takes away everything that I've always hated about performance management solutions, and makes processes quick and simple."

We asked Richard what he hated about other performance management solutions, and he explained that at the time the rest of the sector was using an appraisal system that was over complicated, and even the most basic activity such as adding an objective involved several minutes of clicking, whereas Clear Review makes task quick and easy.

He goes on to tell us that the implementation went great, with the fastest set up of any system like this so far. They started with just one school for a pilot, based on the smooth implementation, ease use, and uptake from staff in that school, they then decided to roll the system out to the whole trust.

When it came to staff buy-in there was much to consider. The education sector is heavily unionised, and it was important to get buy-in from staff. Fortunately the employees at Leigh Academies Trust saw benefits from the system straight away, seeing how easy it was to use, how they could set and track goals, get real time feedback and receive year round support if needed. Because of this staff felt that implementing this system was something that was done for them, rather than too them.



## Benefits of Advanced Clear Review

A big benefit Leigh Academy Trust has seen from using Advanced Clear Review is that around 2,000 staff members that work across the Trust can now use the same system for performance management, something which has historically been a struggle.

“We used to have two systems, one for teaching staff, and one for support staff. This felt very ad-hoc and disjointed. That’s why one thing that drew us towards Advanced Clear Review was that it’s one system for everyone. Every check-in is unique, and will address different matters depending on the person’s role within the trust, but ultimately the platform works well for everyone no matter what their role.”

Richard Taylor, Leigh Academies Trust.

The real time feedback function has also been a benefit, it is used in a variety of ways throughout the trust, from peer to peer feedback to lesson observations. Lesson observations used to be done using complex forms, but now it is much simpler, because using Advanced Clear Review means that feedback can be given and received in minutes, and stored on the system to be viewed when needed.

This has a significant impact on the trust, as saving time is a huge benefit due to how busy the world of education is, being able to cut down on the time it takes to complete admin tasks like this means that time be invested in other tasks. And being able to look back on lesson feedback over time can help to boost teaching staff development, giving them a clear look at how they are progressing and where to improve.

“In briefings we model effective feedback; celebrate those colleagues who have provided the most feedback; and we encourage the use of the ‘request feedback’ function to further embed the continual drive for improving practice across the Academy. We all appreciate being able to provide feedback for colleagues across the Trust and this contributes to our collaboration across a wider range of schools.”

Laura Smith, Principal at Molehill Primary Academy

Because of this the trust now developed a great feedback culture, with thousands of pieces of feedback coming through in the last 12 months alone. This really shows us how engaged the staff across the trust are with the system, and are seeing enough benefit from giving and receiving feedback to keep doing it consistently.

“Feedback is now embedded within our practice and our shared vision of having ‘boundless ambition’; we use it to highlight the positive impact, both big and small moments, that our colleagues are having on a daily basis. Staff go above and beyond for our pupils, community and one another - this is a chance for us to recognise specific individuals for this. Morale has improved as a result of this recognition”

Laura Smith, Principal at Molehill Primary Academy

Leigh Academy Trust use Clear Review to develop staff and identify who is ready to progress in the organisation, by using career conversations to talk about future and potential, and talent snapshots to show HR and leaders when staff are ready for progression.

Having an online performance management platform also came in useful when it came to working from home during the pandemic. Activities like check-ins, inductions, goal setting etc. can all be carried out easily online, and all necessary information is saved on the platform, so those who need it can view it from anywhere.

Because the platform is more flexible than previously used solutions, it can help with work life balance too. Clear Review enables more support to be given to those members of staff who need it, whilst those who don't can have less frequent check-ins. Having this support, along with clear goals and open feedback, means people have more clarity, which reduces stress and improves well-being.

This means Leigh Academy Trust is no longer just driving performance, but is also supporting well-being for all staff members, which ultimately makes for a better workplace.

As with nearly all organisations within the education sector, trusts do not have an unlimited pot of money, and therefore need to consider budget and value for money when it comes to investing in software. When it came to Clear Review it replaced existing performance management tools in a lot of the schools, and the trust have found it to be more efficient and user friendly, making it a sound investment.

We asked Richard what the best thing about Clear Review was, he said:

“For me, the simplicity is the platform’s strongest feature, it’s what drew us to the platform, we have talked in the past about making changes within Clear Review, but ultimately we don’t want to complicate what is a really efficient and easy to use system.”

Wrapping up our conversation we asked Richard, based on his experience what his top tip would be to another trust just starting out with Advanced Clear Review.

“My top tip for any other Trust is “be flexible and encourage personal ownership”, Clear Review can be used effectively in different ways and giving staff ownership of their own performance management and flexibility to use the platform how they feel best suits them means that they are more likely to use it and embed it into their working lives.”







## We would love to hear from you

We hope this was a useful insight into how the Leigh Academies Trust use Advanced Clear Review to streamline their operations. If you would like to find out more about how Advanced Clear Review can enable better performance management within your organisation, and start saying yes to a people first culture, get in touch with us today to book a demo.

[Contact us](#)



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