

Goal Online Assessment Services help motivate and assess disengaged pupils

How Gateshead's Pupil Referral Unit has benefited from Goal Online Assessment Services

Over the past year, Behavioural Support Services - a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) based in Gateshead - has been successfully improving student progress and attainment through the online interactive assessment service *Goal*. Developed by EDI, *Goal* is designed to monitor both individual and class development whilst giving diagnostic and formative feedback that supports effective teaching, learning and target setting. The assessments have enabled the PRU to capture and measure a wide range of pupil knowledge and skill capabilities without its pupils feeling pressurised or under the examination spotlight. Many pupils arrive at the educational establishment with little or no record of attainment and such reports have therefore been invaluable in enabling the tracking of pupil progress.

A far cry from an average school, the Behavioural Support Services is registered as a Pupil Referral Unit with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). The PRU takes on a variety of pupils, including school referrals, expelled pupils, pregnant teenagers and pupils who stay at home due to illness. It is spread over four Centre sites across the town of Gateshead, supporting over 80 pupils within the four Centres and a further 125 with home tuition. Taking on pupils of all ages, the PRU follows the National Curriculum from Key Stage 2 right through to Key Stage 4. Unlike a standard school where pupils generally see their education through, pupils at the PRU stay for varying lengths of time – from as little as a few weeks or months to several years.

As a result, the Gateshead based PRU faces many significant challenges in recording pupil progress and measuring attainment. With pupils constantly leaving for a new school or even a new borough, pulling assessment data and reports together on each pupil is key to aiding his or her transition.

Recognising that the majority of students were motivated by PCs rather than pen and paper and having seen another PRU successfully use *Goal* to deliver online assessment, Behavioural Support Services decided to trial *Goal* online assessment services in December 2006. One year on, it has rolled *Goal* out across the core subjects of English, Maths, ICT, Life Skills and Science and has never looked back.

Colin Carr, Deputy Manager of Behaviour Support Services commented: "Up until we introduced *Goal*, we used a variety of assessment tools across the curriculum. We were lacking a product that would offer us assessment and data reports in a consistent format that we could use from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 and across our four sites. With *Goal*, we can extract standardised data as the pupil progresses through various assessment levels – we do not have to waste time changing formats and adapting processes to make the information fit. As a result, it is far easier to compile reports on pupils' development and we can even send parents copies of the reports, keeping them involved in their child's progress."

With many of its pupils disengaged with learning, PRU uses *Goal* online assessment services to ensure that its pupils can be assessed within a positive environment, suiting the way they think and work and helping motivate them. Rather than reading questions from a piece of paper, students at the PRU are presented with exciting material such as flash animations and interactive multiple choice questions. As a result, the school has noticed that its students actually engage with the assessment and enjoy using it – a fundamental change in their attitudes. Colin Carr commented: “Being a PRU, we have to engage pupils that are undergoing situations in their lives. *Goal* does just that.”

Colin Carr believes that one of the essential benefits of *Goal* is its flexibility and the way that it can be delivered by teaching assistants as well as teachers. He commented: “One of the benefits of *Goal* is the fact that pupils can complete the assessments when they are ready – there are no fixed examination dates. The tests can be carried out individually or within groups, both inside and outside the Centre environment. It therefore creates minimum disruption to classes and offers maximum flexibility, all whilst providing us with invaluable data.”

During their time at the Gateshead PRU, over 99% of pupils will complete a *Goal* test. Many pupils arrive from another Local Authority with little or no supporting data and *Goal* is therefore key in providing the PRU with a baseline assessment of every pupil. Using *Goal*, the PRU can record a starting point for each pupil that can then be built upon to show and track progress as the pupil moves through the curriculum. The online nature of the assessments means that teachers have immediate access to detailed feedback reports, not only saving them time but enabling them to be more effective in target setting and encouraging pupil development.

Colin Carr commented: “The benefits of *Goal* are numerous and we have been really happy with the service. Using *Goal* interactive assessments has made a real difference to the way we are able to measure and report upon pupil progress and performance. The system is incredibly easy to use and has saved time for both management staff and teachers. I would recommend *Goal* to all educational establishments.”

Gareth Phillips, Director of Sales and Business Strategy, EDI, commented: “We are proud to support Behavioural Support Services in Gateshead in its implementation of our pupil-friendly *Goal* interactive assessments. We appreciate that assessment is key to the success of any educational establishment and we would like to congratulate the PRU for raising the bar on pupil progress, teacher effectiveness and overall performance.”



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