SCOMIS
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Case study

Crofty MAT

Martin Post of Crofty MAT talks to Scomis about moving to cloud-based SIMS

About Crofty MAT

Martin became IT Strategy Manager for Crofty MAT when his school, Roskear joined the trust in 2016. Crofty MAT is a group of nine schools which serves the communities of Camborne, Pool and Redruth in West Cornwall.

By 'working as one', Crofty MAT aims to create a culture of shared responsibility for all children in their schools. Sharing resources enables them to maximise opportunities, innovate and pursue equity for their learners. It is in this context that they now have moved all their schools to cloud-based SIMS with the Scomis Hosted Application Service.

We talked to Martin about the challenges first at Roskear and then at Crofty MAT and the considerations and benefits derived from moving to cloud-based SIMS and what the future holds/ where next.

You were originally based at Roskear School which moved to cloud-based SIMS in 2016. Why was that decision made?

I needed a managed service for our MIS so I could focus on exploiting our technology to benefit teaching and learning. But I was also concerned about the state of our server and the safety of our data from a safe-guarding point of view. Moving our MIS to the cloud addressed all these concerns. We knew our data was safe from hacking. We also removed the risk of our local, onsite servers failing.

My concerns were justified. As is generally the case for primary schools, we didn't have a dedicated server room and we had a hot water tank in the far corner. A year after Roskear moved to the cloud, the hot water tank leaked. Although it didn't flood, the hot water was 60° and the room was filled with steam. We lost a server. But because we were online, our MIS was still accessible and sitting safely within Scomis' hosted environment.

When Roskear joined Crofty MAT, how aligned were all the schools?

Every school had a different arrangement for SIMS and had upgraded at different times. Some still had local server-based MIS. Some had already moved to a hosted service but with a different provider.

Our goal is to 'work as one' across the MAT and share resources – having every school with a different set up just didn't facilitate that. Working with numerous service providers wasn't cost effective, it wasn't efficient and the service levels varied enormously. But more than that, it led to a lack of consistency across the schools with regards to data management and it created risks around data security and business continuity.

And then, of course, as a trust, we now had a central team that needed to be able to access each school's SIMS database without physically moving from school to school. All these challenges drove the need to streamline our strategy for MIS and work with a single service provider.

How did you transition to one service provider?

We had the benefit of seeing how different providers worked across the MAT so we could make a direct comparison. We had an incredibly positive experience working with Scomis at Roskear both in terms of the transition to their hosted service and then of their support after the move.

We didn't move every school at once but as and when they needed to upgrade their server. All our schools now use the Scomis Hosted Application Service which gives us access to SIMS from anywhere, better protection from security threats and easy access for the central team to all school SIMS databases. With every move, the transition was seamless.

Standardising is one of the opportunities moving to the cloud offers. Did you standardise before making the move?

That's a good point. Rationalising our service provision and moving to the cloud is just the beginning of the journey. One of the next key challenges we faced in realising our vision of 'working as one' won't be unusual to most trusts – that of consistent use of SIMS across all schools within the trust. To achieve this critical next step we need to standardise our policies, procedures and associated use of MIS whilst bringing all of the key stakeholders in all of our schools with us.

This is an ongoing piece of work but moving across to the cloud has given us the platform to do it and it allows us to do it in stages.

As an example, we have started to look at our pupil conduct data. This is an area which has historically been managed with notes jotted on pieces of paper which are input into a spreadsheet later. One of our schools has taken the lead in addressing this area and Scomis has helped show us what is possible. We've now set our criteria up in SIMS to allow teachers to instantly record pupil conduct and attendance in the classroom. This approach and the associated learnings and benefits experienced within one school can then be shared and cascaded to every other school. There may then be some refinement and re-iteration but our schools now benefit from sharing best practice and are empowered to work together to help us achieve a standardised approach as a trust. In turn this will give us the consistent approach we need to work together effectively and will give leadership teams an accurate picture of pupil conduct within each school and across the trust

> *"Our Scomis account manager works proactively with us to understand our priorities and to help us exploit the full potential of SIMS."*
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> **Martin Post**
> **Crofty MAT**

Would you recommend Scomis?

Absolutely. Scomis is one of my most trusted partners. They're very good at what they do and the service is generally outstanding.

The support from the service desk is fantastic. If one of our administrative staff has a question, I can confidently refer them to Scomis and know I won't hear about the problem again – the Scomis team will sort it and talk our staff through what they need to do. The Hosted Application Service gives us all the benefits of SIMS in the cloud without having to change our MIS. It's available 24/7 and there is no question that our central team benefits enormously from having easy access to each schools SIMS database.

Our Scomis account manager works proactively with us to understand our priorities and to help us exploit the full potential of SIMS. They are helping us standardise and streamline the number of overlapping applications we use so we can get best value out of our MIS. In addition, we have access to free training resources through ScoLearn Digital, as well as tutor-led training courses and consultancy should we need more in-depth help.

We definitely benefit from the relationship Scomis has with ESS – as a key approved SIMS service provider they can feed development needs back to ESS. But Scomis is also responsive to our needs - they continuously evolve and develop their service offering. They've introduced a Managed Reporting Service (MRS) which gives the trust access to a dashboard of key data for all the schools – this service would be perfect for a trust in the process of aligning their schools and wanting to establish a robust approach to trust-wide reporting from SIMS.

It's a true partnership.

To find out more about Scomis and our services for SIMS please refer to our website, contact us on 01392 385300 or email scomis@devon.gov.uk

Find out more
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