

Juniper



Case study

**St Mary's Church of
England VA
Primary School**

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St Mary's C of E VA Primary School



The school



St Mary's Church of England VA Primary School is a one-form entry school in Thornbury, a small market town in South Gloucestershire. With 202 pupils, the school is dedicated to delivering a high-quality education in a supportive, caring environment rooted in Christian values.

Filling the gap in the school's HR support

St Mary's had always depended on education HR support from the Local Authority, but when these services were withdrawn, the senior leadership team was left searching for a new solution. They needed reliable, efficient, and cost-effective legal and HR support, but finding the right provider wasn't easy. Determined to secure the best fit for their school, they began exploring alternative options.

Searching for a new school HR provider

As part of the search for a new HR provider, the school invited Juniper to join a competitive tender process. Among the three shortlisted providers, Juniper stood out as the clear winner. While other suppliers insisted a substantial HRIS was essential, Juniper demonstrated that the school could manage without the associated cost, ultimately saving them a significant amount of money.

With its affordability, expertise, and comprehensive HR support, Juniper proved to be the perfect fit, becoming St Mary's trusted school HR partner.

Guiding the school to the right well-being support for staff

Soon after partnering with Juniper, St Mary's found itself facing a confidential staffing issue that required immediate access to well-being and counselling services. Chris Eastwood, Chair of Governors, was tasked with finding a provider but quickly ran into challenges. One company even quoted a 90-day onboarding period, which was far too long given the urgency of the situation. Chris described the delay as "ineffective" in addressing the school's immediate needs.

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After seeking advice from Juniper, St Mary's was introduced to their preferred partner, Schools Advisory Service (SAS). Juniper's HR consultant quickly recommended SAS's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), which Chris said provided the support the school needed at a "reasonable and fair price."

Lisa Williams, School Business Manager at St Mary's, shared her views:

"We signed up with SAS as recommended by Juniper, and I must say we were impressed by the wealth of services available to us."

Chris added:

"Without Juniper Education, I don't know what we would have done. We explored other options, but Juniper helped us partner with SAS within hours, and at a very favourable rate."

A solution that met the school's HR needs

The EAP services provided to the school included:

- Access to a 24/7 helpline for staff well-being.
- Support for managing workplace stress and mental health

- Tailored advice on HR and legal matters, including disciplinaries, grievances, and sickness absences.
- Counselling services for employees.
- Free HR webinars.
- Learning guides and resources available to Juniper customers.

St Mary's found the SAS onboarding process seamless, with support from Juniper.

Transition to Juniper from the Local Authority

Reflecting on the initial transition to Juniper Education, Chris said:

"I expected the process to be challenging, especially switching to an independent provider after relying on the council. However, it turned out to be much easier than I anticipated. Juniper had the capacity to meet our needs quickly—something the Local Authority couldn't always provide."

How the service has impacted staff at the school

The EAP, as recommended by Juniper, quickly proved its worth when a school employee needed support during an absence. The counselling services offered not only addressed the immediate needs but went above and beyond, with Juniper arranging additional sessions at the school's request. This exceptional level of care made a lasting impact on St Mary's.

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Chris shared: "Other companies don't offer uncapped counselling services like Juniper has arranged for St Mary's. The fact that our employee asked for more sessions and continues to use the service speaks volumes about the quality of support provided."

In addition to the counselling, the school has also taken advantage of the pharmacy service offered by SAS, and Lisa Williams has attended several of the free webinars included in the service package.

Lisa shared her experience:

"I can personally recommend the 'Healthier Happier You' webinar, which runs for three weeks. I wanted to experience it firsthand so I could share insights with staff. I attended two of the three sessions and found Gareth to be incredibly personable and positive. I also liked that everyone attending were from schools, creating a comfortable and relatable environment. His expertise was clear, especially seeing how many attendees had taken part in previous sessions and were returning again."

Why Juniper stands out for St Marys

Reflecting on the experience, Chris stated:

"The support from Juniper has been excellent; whenever I needed advice, they were just a phone call away. My consultant has been attentive, guiding me every step of the way throughout our partnership, and Juniper has truly been head and shoulders above the rest. The whole experience has been quick, easy, and really positive, and I'd recommend them to other schools looking for a similar service without hesitation."



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