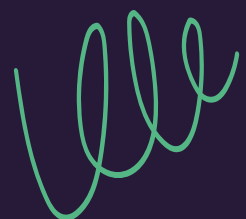




Case study

Sisra Observe:
Horndean Technology
College



Case study



Horndean Technology College

Introduction



Horndean Technology College, a thriving secondary school, has been a dedicated user of Sisra Observe since 2008. The school's commitment to educational excellence is exemplified in the diverse ways it uses the Observe software – for lesson observations, staff self-evaluations, teacher appraisals, and support staff performance management. Deputy Headteacher, Nigel Sheppard, shares how Sisra Observe has positively impacted pupil and staff success at Horndean.

An Adaptable Solution for Evolving Needs

When the school initially adopted Sisra (which later became Sisra Observe), it was looking for a programme that could customise how information about staff performance was collected and shared. Nigel explains, "What happened was, at the time, there was a change to performance tables, there was a lot of data around, and people were looking for a solution to be able to capture the data that you needed and be able to present it in a certain way."

Nigel highlights that Sisra Observe's adaptability was a significant factor in the school's choice. "We found that we can more or less bespoke it to our needs," Nigel notes. "That's the biggest advantage, really. Whereas other off-the-shelf products have a set way of doing it, and you don't have the autonomy you want when you are devising and changing things year on year."

The school found the tool especially beneficial for lesson observations and extended its use to performance management for both support staff and teachers. This flexibility and adaptability made it the ideal choice for Horndean Technology College.

Challenges, Customisations, and Future Possibilities

Implementing a new software comes with an initial learning curve, and Sisra Observe is no exception. Nigel is honest about the journey through customising Sisra Observe and configuring templates, which started with some experimentation and trial and error to get it right. "Once you're in the swing of it, it becomes easy to clone [the templates] and set up for other areas," Nigel said.

Through this dynamic process, the school has generated a wide range of custom templates tailored to their many needs across performance management and lesson observation. Sisra Observe's customisability makes it an ideal solution for addressing all types of unique requirements.

Efficient Data Management

The team at Horndean are committed to maintaining good data hygiene. Nigel understands the importance of data management. Staff are proactive about regularly refreshing their data, with their most significant import happening at the start of year in September. "It's a simple, straightforward process that's easily managed by administrative staff," Nigel shares.

Case study



Horndean Technology College

Even with a staff of 200, including 80 teachers and 120 support staff, Nigel confirms: "It's easy in terms of setting up, it doesn't take long to do, and it's all pretty seamless."

A Breakdown of Different Use Cases for Sisra Observe

Horndean Technology College uses Sisra Observe in four key ways: class observations, self-evaluations, teacher appraisals, and support staff performance management.

Class Observations

Before using Sisra Observe, the school tried to create their own system for observations, but soon found that it was limited in functionality.

"I initially created a glorified spreadsheet," Nigel shares, "but we quickly found that it wasn't enough. You couldn't put all the narrative in there. You couldn't make comments. You couldn't attach evidence. So when we moved over to Sisra Observe, it was a blessing because, before, everything took me such a long time."

The Deputy Headteacher continues: "Sisra Observe has proven to be user-friendly and minimally demanding in terms of training. Staff quickly grasped the system's setup, finding it easy to follow with self-explanatory templates. With time, it has become second nature for key staff, and new employees swiftly adapt to it."

The school uses it for various tasks, from formal lesson observations to learning walks, with every staff member actively using and recording on the platform. The ease of login and portability, with

staff taking laptops to facilitate use, ensures a seamless experience with no reported issues.

Teacher Appraisals

The school regularly uses Sisra Observe for teacher appraisals, performance management, and professional development. Teachers are able to independently track their progress in various areas (as customised by the school) and upload evidence to support their performance. Managers are able to oversee performance at a glance and make comments where appropriate. With year-round regular management, performance reviews and appraisals are easy and efficient to complete.

Self-Evaluations

At Horndean Technology College, staff seamlessly utilise the templates for their own self-evaluations. Staff who use the system have praised the ease of navigating the platform. Even when there is staff turnover or a few newcomers, they adopt the system quickly and it becomes essential to their self-evaluation and performance management process. Because staff can report their own progress and evaluations, they have full visibility over their areas of strength and improvement, as well as areas of growth they wish to develop through professional development.



Case study



Horndean Technology College

Support Staff Performance Management

As with teachers, support staff performance at Horndean are managed through Sistra Observe. Managers of support staff oversee their performance and streamline all reviews through the system. While most support staff are able to access the self-service platform and update their own details, managers are able to set up staff profiles, input performance data and log comments on behalf of staff who do not have regular access to a computer.

Approximately 70% of support staff engage directly with the system, while the remaining 30% rely on colleagues to transcribe their information. Although statistically, support staff typically receive less scrutiny than teachers, Sistra Observe's customisable templates offers the functionality to address different staffing needs.

The Solution: A Year-Round Solution For Appraisals

"It's all in one place. It's all there," Nigel shares. Sistra Observe is a comprehensive platform to manage everything you need for effective appraisals and continuous performance monitoring.

Like many school, teaching staff at Horndean Technology College are assessed across four key areas:

- Student outcomes
- Lesson observations
- Contribution to the development plan
- Personal professional development

The system allows for a structured approach, emphasising accountability and collaborative judgment. The school has a moderation committee, consisting of the headteacher, business manager, and deputy headteacher, who get together to ensure consistency and accuracy in all assessments. They rely on the evidence stored in Sistra Observe, occasionally requesting additional evidence if necessary. The system's year-round accessibility streamlines the appraisal process and minimises unexpected outcomes.

Professional Development and Pupil Outcomes with Sistra Observe

Horndean Technology College uses Sistra Observe to identify professional development opportunities and improve pupil outcomes. The platform creates two-way transparency that allows teachers to see their observation feedback, offering the opportunity for self-reflection and growth.

The leadership at Horndean are big proponents of using the data to question assumptions about what constitutes "good" teaching and driving pedagogical growth.

"It's there in visual, and everybody can see it. Obviously, there are certain controlled permissions in some areas. But the user, those who have been observed, can see and access their observation details. We use many action points in Sistra Observe to give those opportunities for reflection."

Moreover, the school uses the data from Sistra to compare lesson observations with pupil outcomes, challenging their grading system and continuously improving their teaching quality.

Case study

Horndean Technology College

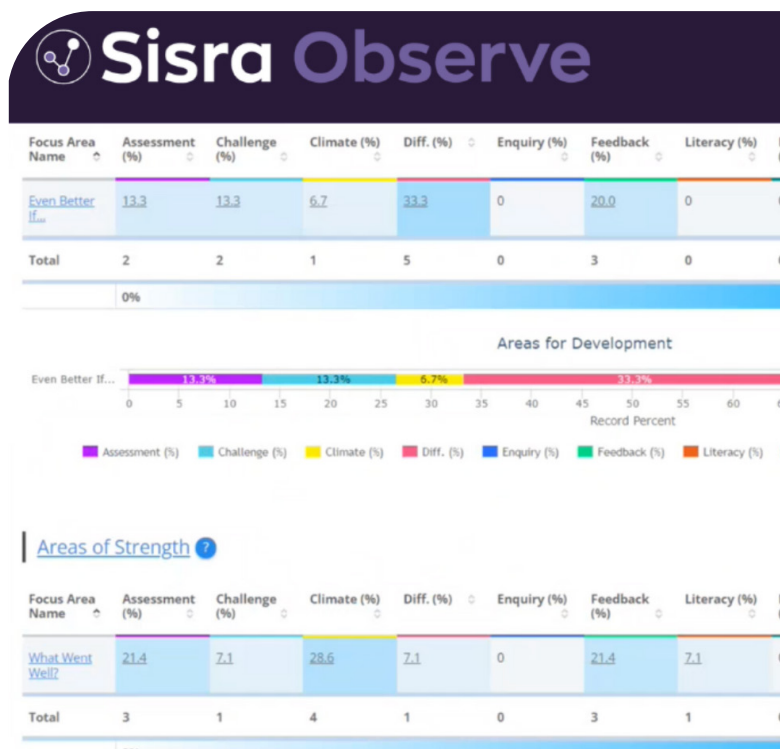



A Resounding Recommendation

Here is the Deputy Headteacher’s advice for any school leaders looking for a performance management and observation solution:

“If you want something that’s bespoke, that you can manipulate to meet your needs, then Sistra Observe is good. Not many systems on the market have the individuality to make it bespoke. That’s a real positive. It’s easy to use and easy to set up once you get going – it embeds itself.”

He also encourages schools to explore how other schools are using Observe. Because the platform is highly customisable, the possibilities are endless. If you’d like to learn more about how schools use Observe for performance management, evaluations, and observations, speak to our team.





Need help?
Talk to an education
expert.

Call us:

0345 200 8600

Email us:

enquiries@junipereducation.org

junipereducation.org

