



Neo Payroll case study

Compass Eko Trust

Formed in April 2026 through the merger of two established trusts, Compass Eko Trust now comprises 28 schools across seven local authority areas in London and South East.

Headquartered in Eltham, south east London, the trust employs more than 1,700 staff and has an £80 million annual staff wage bill.

Bringing together two large organisations through a merger always creates challenges, particularly when each operated different payroll systems; Eko Trust had been successfully using Neo People Management's payroll management service since 2023, while Compass Partnership of Schools was relying on a local authority payroll service.

It was during the official merger that the limitations of Compass's LA arrangement became clear to Jo Daniels, Chief Financial Officer at Compass and now Compass Eko Trust.

"We were finding local authority payroll really stretched to actually meet our needs," she explains. "Sometimes we didn't know our final payrolls before we got to the end of the month – we got our reports and that was what was going out. We didn't have a chance to change anything or add a leaver or starter if they'd been missed out."

For a growing trust, that lack of visibility and responsiveness was a big challenge which was largely solved following the merger when all the Compass schools transitioned into the Neo payroll system.

"Moving to Neo has allowed us to have lots more visibility on our day-to-day information," says Jo. "It also allowed our staff to use Neo's self-service employee portal to access and update pay and employment information rather than fill out forms that sometimes get duplicated or updated incorrectly. It's much more structured."

The migration to Neo took place around the Easter period, when many school staff were away from work. At the same time, the trust also took the decision to move all employees onto a common pay date of the 25th of each month, creating consistency across the newly merged organisation.

It was a complex process not without challenges, but Jo says the implementation process was supported every step of the way by the Neo team. “I think it went as smoothly as any payroll change could go,” she says. “Neo held our hand from the start, sending us a schedule of what we needed to do and when we needed to do it, and arranging a fortnightly meeting to chat through any issues we had.”

While there were some minor implementation challenges, including pension administration issues linked to the merging of two different payroll systems, these were resolved quickly through close collaboration between the trust and Neo.

That supportive relationship, reinforced with training sessions for office staff including recorded demonstrations that could be revisited when needed, helped schools adapt quickly to the new system.

Customer support proved to be one of the biggest advantages of the service, with Neo’s ticketing system cited by Jo as a standout feature. “Customer service has been second to none,” she says. “You feel like you’ve got somebody there with you. You’ll get a reply within 24 hours whereas previously we would ask a question and we might get a response 20 days later.”

Today, one of the biggest benefits for Compass Eko Trust is the quality of reporting and visibility available to finance teams and school leaders.

“The reporting that comes out of Neo is fabulous,” says Jo. “I know exactly how many payslips I pay a month, and I know when all my banking is going to come out. To have that confidence when you are dealing with 1,700 payslips each month is valuable.”

The payroll timetable also provides schools with clear deadlines and review periods. Soft and hard payroll cut-off dates mean that schools have time to check payroll information, identify any missing starters or leavers and make final adjustments before the payroll is processed.

“All my schools have said that they much prefer the system,” says Jo. “They feel as if they know what’s going on and they’re much more likely to pick up on any anomalies than previously.”

For Jo, the decision to move all Compass Eko schools on to the Neo payroll service has been unquestionably positive. “Customer service is second to none, which for a multi-academy trust is really important,” she says. “I’m very happy that we moved. I certainly wouldn’t go back to our old service.”



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