



Case study

Eko Trust

Eko Trust was established in 2016 and is currently made up of 10 schools in three hubs: London, Suffolk, and Brighton.

Three more schools are set to join the Brighton hub in early 2026 and in April 2026 Eko is merging with the Compass Partnership of Schools to become a large trust of 28 schools with 1,600 employees and an £80 million staff wage bill.

In 2022 Eko Trust went out to tender to a payroll provider because they weren't happy with their current arrangement. Strictly Education was appointed at the beginning of 2023 and in April 2025 the service was transferred to Neo People Management.

Teresa Rowland, Trust Lead for Finance, said: "We had four choices, really, at that point, one of which going ahead and transferring to Neo. We'd had some issues with pensions in that there was a technical change to how pensions were done. Neo hadn't had those same issues, so this reassured us that continuing with them was the right thing to do."

The transfer was a seamless process, she adds.

"The support that we had from the Neo was great, especially when you bear in mind that we were by no means the only set of trust schools that were transferring over to them at the same time."



Neo has helped Eko Trust to complete a major shift in the way it administers staff payroll, says Philip Cranwell, Deputy CEO and CFO. “The payroll system we had before in effect required our staff to submit details for somebody else to put into the system.

We wanted to move to a self-service system, where our school teams were accountable and had the power to ensure that the right payroll information, pension information, etcetera, was loaded onto the system.”

As well as reducing errors – these have gone from one in 20 to one in 50 since the transition to Neo – there are also big time savings. Adoption of the Neo payroll system and service has, by Teresa and Philip’s estimate, reduced the payroll workload of each school business manager working in trust schools by a staggering 50%.

Eko Trust would wholeheartedly recommend Neo People Management to trusts looking for a new payroll service solution. “I’m involved in a lot of online Trust networks and a common question from contributors is whether they should take payroll in-house,” says Philip.

“That’s not something we would ever contemplate, because it doesn’t make sense. Why would we take on something so complex and so important when we have an organisation like Neo as a partner?

“We will always recommend Neo because it supports organisational self-service, as well as absolutely lowering the risk of getting it wrong.”

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