

Top marks as ERA UK make great savings for Davenies School

CLIENT: Davenies School
SECTOR: Education
COST CATEGORIES: Photocopiers

Service levels and outdated systems were a cause for concern across several key areas: Contract Catering, Communications, Contract Cleaning and Photocopiers. Keen to leverage Expense Reduction Analysts' (ERA) external expertise and impressed with the no-nonsense approach, Caroline asked ERA to commence a series of reviews.

THE CLIENT

Founded in 1940, Davenies is an independent school for boys in Beaconsfield. Its ethos and philosophy enable pupils to make the most of their preparatory years, supported by high quality pastoral care, a broad curriculum and many extracurricular opportunities.

Beaconsfield Educational Trust Ltd was created in 1962 to administer the School, which it does to this day. There are some 337 boys on roll and over 70 dedicated full and part time staff. The school's high-quality teachers have an excellent track record of preparing children for life at the country's leading senior schools and beyond.

THE CHALLENGE

As Bursar, Caroline Purdom is responsible for day-to-day operations at Davenies School. Caroline met with ERA Client Manager and Project Specialist, Chris Wardle, in what was to be the start of a five-year-long working partnership. In that time, Chris and his team have transformed services and support in several key areas of the school, secured significant cost-savings and reduced time spent by Caroline and her staff dealing with poor performing contractors. "We were clear about the outcomes that we wanted to achieve, but understanding the market and what a good, bad or even an average deal looked like, was difficult. We needed independent, objective advice from experts in the field. And that's exactly what we got. At the outset, much as I knew I needed help, I wasn't sure if it represented good value for money - the reality is that I've achieved better quality of service all round and I have almost certainly made cost savings and reduced my own and my staffs' time in getting things sorted! It's been a win-win scenario." Caroline Purdom, Bursar commented.

SUMMARY OF SAVINGS

Photocopiers

26%^o

Fixed Fee projects - improving service in contract catering, cleaning and communications.

ADDED VALUE

- Improved service and support from suppliers
- Future-proof systems and updated solutions
- Independent and objective market reviews
- Better-fit of suppliers.



DAVENIES

"ERA are easy to work with, accessible and we have the utmost confidence in them. I always tell anyone considering a cost-saving or service level review of any kind to contact them, without hesitation."

CAROLINE PURDOM,
BURSAR, DAVENIES SCHOOL

MAKING LIGHT WORK OF COMPLEX TENDER ANALYSIS

After 12 years with the same contract caterers, Davenies felt things had become a little tired. Caroline had already identified several companies she wished to invite to tender but realised she needed support to objectively evaluate their responses.

Thanks to his extensive market knowledge, Chris evaluated tender responses and arranged for the top two companies to present their ideas, along with some tasting plates. He then reviewed both presentations and briefed the Chair of the Finance Committee and Headmaster on each. Armed with this knowledge, Davenies chose to switch to a new contractor, resulting in better menus, a more vibrant meal offering to pupils, a much improved level of service, committed and responsive support from area management and a small saving over the previous spend. Three years on, the initial contract period with the new provider has just been renewed.

FUTURE-PROOFING COMMUNICATIONS

As the school's communications needs were expanding, it had become clear that the current system was not meeting requirements. The system itself was unreliable and based on three disparate service providers. Chris selected ERA communications specialist, Pritesh Patel, to undertake the complex project.

After agreeing a scope of work, Pritesh developed a comprehensive tender which he took out to market. Then, by helping Davenies to understand the different technologies, the associated advantages and disadvantages and which solutions they should consider, six companies were evaluated and down-selected to two.

After both had presented to school stakeholders, Pritesh was able to advise Davenies which solutions would be most appropriate to meet their requirements both technically and cost effectively. The outcome was a solution which was much more feature-rich and of lower overall cost than the current system.

"The new comms system has future-proofed the school in terms of business continuity. Our reception staff have massively reduced the hours spent solving problems, we have an advanced automated messaging service for parents and the entire structure is integrated with our door security systems," explained Caroline.

FIVE YEARS AND COUNTING

ERA client relationships don't end with identifying the best suppliers and saving costs. Chris and his fellow specialists have continued to work closely with Davenies over the last five years, ensuring transitions to new suppliers were seamless and that tendered service levels were being delivered. By undertaking quarterly audits, ERA UK ensures that savings are being achieved and, as its needs change, contracts are optimised where possible for the benefit of the school.

CLEANING UP SERVICE LEVELS

For cleaning, the overriding objective was to improve quality. The incumbent contractor had been in place for many years, during which the school's cleaning requirements had evolved. However, the service specification had not been updated and there were regular staffing issues. Chris brought in ERA cleaning specialist, Anthony Kinder, who incorporated a new, fit-for-purpose cleaning specification into a detailed tender process, evaluating and scoring supplier responses on a wide range of criteria.

Anthony presented a shortlist of better-fit suppliers to the school and assisted in their decision-making by facilitating like-for-like comparisons. Davenies chose a new supplier in time for the start of the new academic year. The school now enjoys a cleaning service tailored to its requirements and at a lower cost. Most importantly, Caroline describes the new supplier's customer service as 'first rate'.

BRINGING LOCAL EXPERTISE TO THE TABLE

ERA photocopier specialist, Andrew Kinnear, wasted no time evaluating the incumbent supplier's terms and service levels. During the process, he uncovered several critical contract terms including a termination clause which, if not triggered by a specified date, would incur hefty liabilities. In addition, he also highlighted an unjustified over-usage invoice which he helped reduce from £12,000 to £2,000.

Andrew identified several new suppliers that he was confident could place both service and quality at the forefront of their proposals. After guiding Davenies through presentations and reviews, they selected a new local partner. As testament to the new supplier's commitment, all copiers were replaced with more reliable models over the Christmas period to ensure minimal disruption. In addition to the hardware, a 'follow me printing' solution was installed to monitor usage, help reduce needless waste and increase the security of all documents printed.

ERA focus on achieving the best possible outcome for clients; not simply the biggest saving. Davenies chosen copier supplier wasn't the cheapest, reinforcing the fact that although there were healthy savings, the key driver for the school was to award the contract to a local, reliable, ethical supplier, rather than to chase lowest costs.

Now in its third audit period, the project is delivering savings ahead of tender outcomes and crucially, continues to delight the Davenies Team. "I used to get complaints about the copiers all the time," says Caroline, "now people just don't talk about them - that's a sign of success."