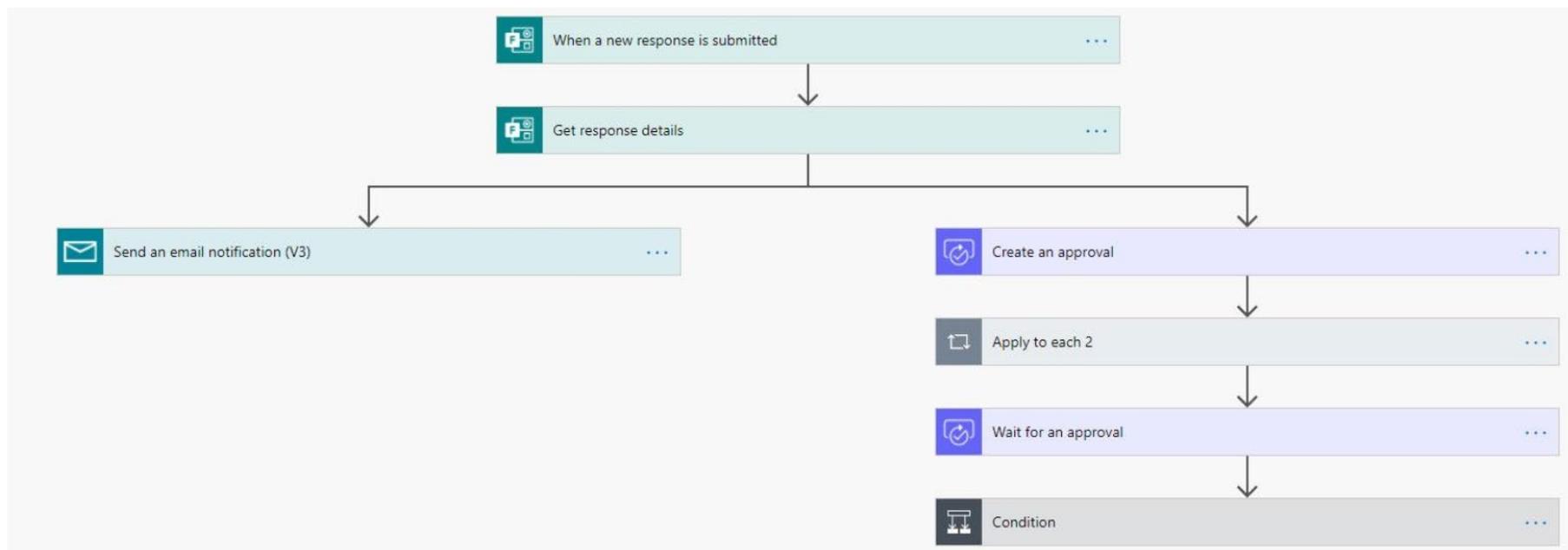


Harnessing the power of technology to streamline processes at Stanground Academy



John Hayes is IT Coordinator at Stanground is a large, coeducational 11-18 academy in Peterborough. Like many other staff at the academy John was excited by the opportunities presented when Stanground migrated to the new GAT digital system 18 months ago. He trained as a GAT 'Digital Champion' and accessed the training available through the Microsoft Educator Community (MEC) to become a Microsoft Innovative Educator. His passion for harnessing IT to make the lives of his colleagues easier has been a real driver for innovation at Stanground Academy.

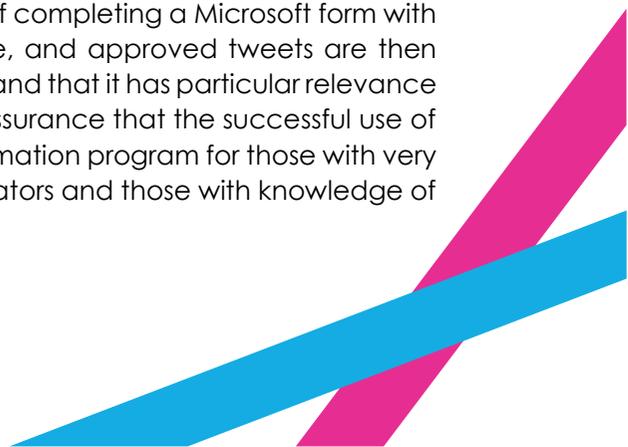


As IT Coordinator John was at the forefront of developments. He worked with the Principal to ensure that staff had access to devices that would enable them to exploit the benefits of the new system. He created a group of 'champions' within the school, usually TLR holders, who were in a position to share ideas with a wider group of staff. John ensured that staff were upskilled through regular slots in school INSET days and by ensuring that staff knew where to go to get support if they needed it. In John's own practice he started with the use of OneNote, completing all his planning and marking through the software. Over time he has moved his marking to Microsoft Teams, having set up a 'Class Team' for each class. This enables students to work entirely online for all but set assessment pieces, John can post assignments and files through the functionality of Teams, he can also give formative assessment to students through the chat function. However, the most important piece of work John has delivered through Microsoft 365 programs has been done through what used to be called Microsoft flow and is now called Power Automate.

John noticed that staff leave of absence requests were a source of frustration for both staff and senior leaders alike. The paper-based system was laborious, time consuming and often resulted in errors. Using Power Automate, John developed an electronic system for processing leave of absence requests. Staff enter their request onto the system through a Microsoft Form. Once completed the request goes to line managers for approval or otherwise. At every stage in the process staff received automated messages that tell them the status of their request. (These automated messages were written by John, in consultation with SLT.) If the line manager approves the request it then goes to the senior deputy headteacher who oversees cover. At this point they approve or decline the leave of absence. The final stage is for the Principal of Stanground Academy to decide if the leave of absence will be with or without pay. At this stage further automated emails go to the academy Human Resource team, the academy data manager and the academy cover manager. In this way every person who needs to be aware of a staff leave of absence is in the loop, and there is no possibility of information failing to reach the right person.

John's system allows the leave of absence process to be managed more quickly, for it to be streamlined and for instant information to go to everybody who needs it. This has provided huge benefits to all involved. Staff can complete these forms on or off site thus making it a much more convenient process and allowing for administrative tasks to take place when staff are home rather than during critical school hours. As evidence of the value of this to staff John points to the number of requests that staff complete at home, in the first 2 weeks of operation 24 of the 37 requests for leave were completed at home. Each of these forms were completed in an average time of 4 minutes. It has reduced the number of pieces of paper circulating the school, waiting for the right person to sign them, this reduction in paperwork has been especially advantageous to senior leaders.

John's drive to improve processes is continuing through an additional piece of work that will add CPD requests to the leave of absence system. He has also created an automated system for Twitter posts to the school's Twitter feed. This involves staff completing a Microsoft form with their proposed tweet. This is sent to the member of admin staff responsible for PR for approval or otherwise, and approved tweets are then uploaded. John believes that power automate could be used to streamline almost every process within school and that it has particular relevance for administrative staff and for those with pastoral responsibilities. What is heartening to IT novices is John's reassurance that the successful use of Power Automate does not rely on an individual having expert knowledge of coding. It is effectively it is an automation program for those with very little knowledge of coding and can be used by those with no knowledge at all. However, for school IT coordinators and those with knowledge of coding there is no limit to what you can achieve.



What can we learn from Stanground Academy?

- Make sure you take the time to get the training you need to make the most of the technology
- Take advantage of the free resources available on the Microsoft Educator Community
- Work with others to maximise the potential for innovation