DANESHOLME ACADEMIES

Danesholme Infant Academy

How Microsoft skills training improves education, saves time, and helps staff wellbeing

Digital transformation provided staff and children at Danesholme Infant Academy with updated devices running Microsoft applications. With tailored training from Our Learning Cloud (OLC), staff were soon using it to enhance education. Further training enabled the Head to automate a variety of admin, processes, and reminders with Microsoft Power Automate: saving time, improving efficiency, lightening staff workloads, and improving wellbeing.

The client

Danesholme Infant Academy is twinned with Danseholme Junior Academy, and is a two form, 10 classes school in Corby, with around 30 staff and 250 pupils. It provides wrap around care (8am – 6pm) and in 2023 saw its Ofsted rating raised to Good.

Driver for change

In 2019, a digital transformation programme improved ICT at Danesholme. This provided staff and children with updated devices equipped with the latest Microsoft collaboration and productivity applications.

But it's one thing having the technology, and it's another thing knowing how to get the best out of it. So as part of its implementation service, OLC provides each school with several days of skills training.

Solution

"Once they can see how to do something that's helpful to them, people are quick to embrace new technology," observes Natasha Epton, Training Director at Our Learning Cloud. She continues, "We work with each Head to focus on what's most useful for their school, and as we train, we help staff to build something that they can use straight away in their work."

"I broke down the elements that I wanted staff to learn about, and that included Teaching Assistants," explains Carol May, Head of Academy at Danesholme Infant Academy. "All our classes have Teaching Assistants in and if they're as trained as the teachers, it makes life a lot easier when you're dealing with children that don't know what they're doing. You go from one to 30 to one to 15."

"When staff saw the benefits for the children, they got really onboard and pretty soon they took things further for themselves, and then brought it to staff meetings to share," adds Carol.

Teaching staff began using Microsoft Forms for spelling and multiplication tests. Its automatic marking isn't just good for teachers: it provides children with rapid assessment. By embedding notes, children can also receive immediate and relevant feedback.
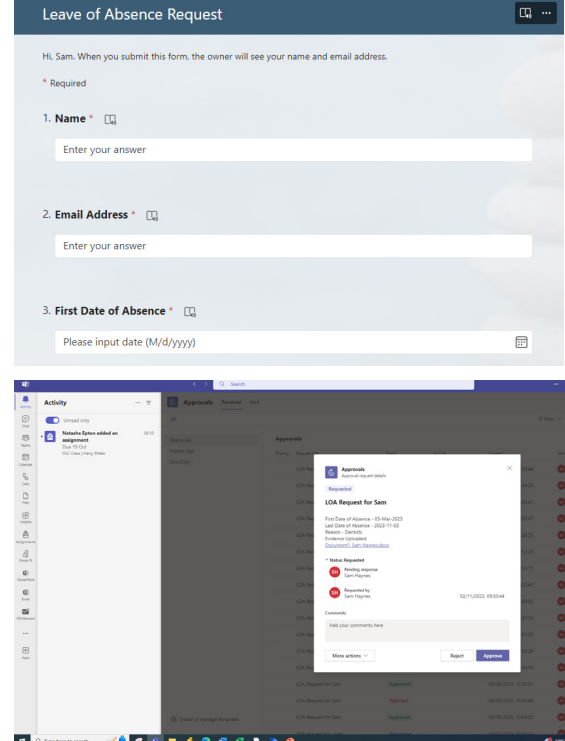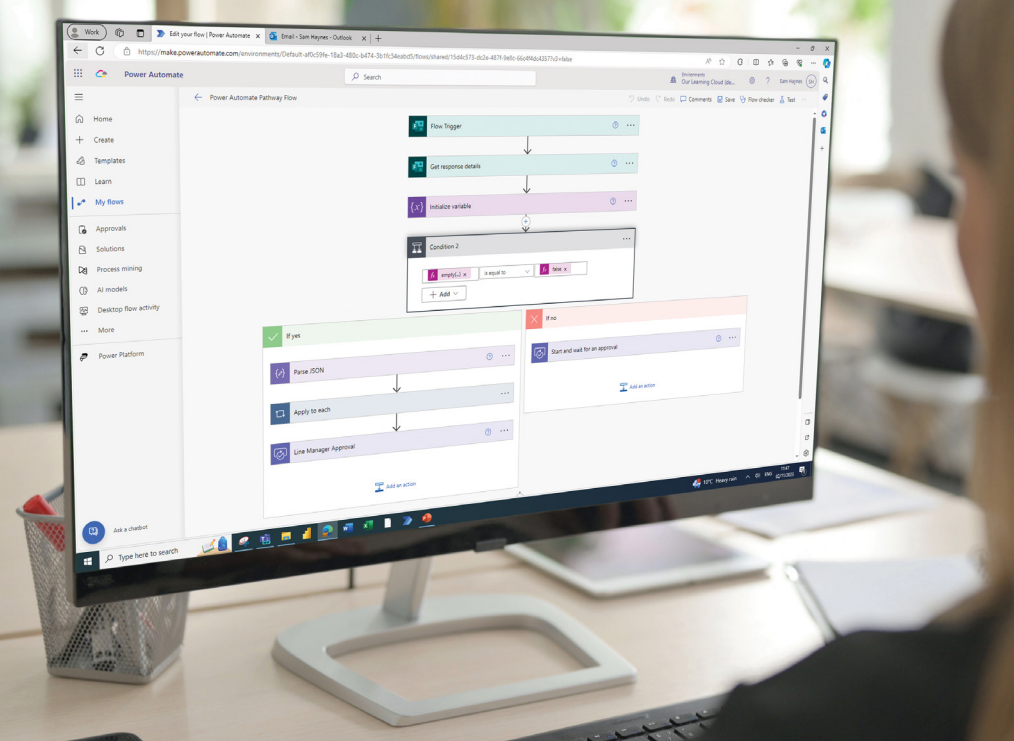
"I realised that staff were very quickly picking up all the things we needed for our children: they were creating Sways, Forms, Flips and really improving education," notes Carol. "And I wanted to make school management easier."

Microsoft Power Automate helps users automate recurring tasks and mundane, manual processes. OLC provided Carol with the training and support she needed, to automate leave of absence and sickness records and workflows. Subsequently, Carol has automated a plethora actions, information flows and reminders.

> **For me it's all the things I have to keep on top of. If I can automate it, I do. I think if you can make life easier you should,"** declares Carol.

Benefits

The training from OLC has helped across the school, enhancing education, reducing workloads, and improving staff wellbeing.

"It's immense – we do so much following OLC's training," reveals Carol.

> **They're making my life easier, and staff lives easier, and my children are getting a better education because my teachers have more time".**

Expanding on this, Carol states, "From an admin point of view there's a huge time saving as well as from a teacher point of view. We now do a lot of live marking so there's no books going home."

Using Power Automate has revolutionised work for Carol. "It's almost like having another person working for you, with lots of things happening in the background because Power Automate is doing them for you," says Carol.

Now, when any of the school's digital forms are completed, Power Automate ensures that relevant staff are immediately notified of just the things they need to know. For example, when there is a First Aid incident

Carol must hear if the child needs to go to hospital, and whether any defective equipment was involved, while the teacher must know of any absence, and so on.

When Ofsted visited, Carol found that she had all the information she needed at her fingertips.

Danesholme is now using Microsoft Power BI to extract and visualise key data from SIMS and will soon have an app. Realising that many of her midday supervisors don't have ready computer access, Carol is working with OLC so they can log incidents and actions through their phones, there and then.

"I'm not a computer geek at all, I don't understand the ins and outs of computers, but I do understand the need for making life easier, and thanks to Microsoft and OLC I'm doing that," explains Carol.

As well as finding the training hugely impactful, Carol and her staff have found the OLC team great to work with.

"Whether its face to face or online, the training is great, and it's always followed up. They're approachable, and they're on hand to support you," remarks Carol.

> **What I like about working with OLC is that they've been teachers, they know what it's like on the ground, and are unique in that respect. How they teach is relatable to education, and that's what you want,"** comments Carol.

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