

## Case Study: St Swithun's Catholic Primary School, Southsea

"Using the Governors' Virtual Office (GVO) has made my job as Clerk so much easier and it has enabled me to provide a much better service to my governors" says Sue Edwards, Clerk to the Governing Body at St Swithun's.



In 2009 the school's governors started looking for a better way of working than the combination of paper and emails they were using to govern the school.

They discovered the Governors' Virtual Office (GVO) - a secure web site designed specifically as a place where governors can store all their working papers and libraries of information and hold on line discussions. The site was set up to St. Swithun's specification early in 2010 to reflect the structure and working practices of their governing body.

Both Sue and the governors found it easy to use and it quickly became the place where the Governors do all their work and store all the information. There is now dramatically less paper and fewer emails. "It's now much easier and I

know where all the information is" says Sue. Governors like the fact that they can go on to the web site whenever they want - and the Clerk benefits from getting far fewer requests for information. "Both the school and the governors love it" adds Sue. "They consider it an asset because in one place we have all the working papers, policies, minutes, agendas, etc in a well structured, secure but accessible web site.

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And it's a great help to new governors as well." Paper copies of documents getting lost, destroyed, or taken and not returned are no longer problems. Confidentiality is easier to maintain.

Governors also like the fact that they can stay in touch and continue to contribute when travelling simply by accessing the Virtual Office; and there's no more coming home to a great pile of paper to be read in a hurry either. And 24 – 7 access has improved life for Sue who does her Clerk's work from home.



The system makes satisfying auditors much simpler, too. "Our last FMSiS audit covered two years worth of evidence – one year paper based and one year GVO. I know which I preferred – and I could do it from home. It was brilliant," adds Sue.

All the information that was needed was stored in the one place and the GVO's built in search tools made producing the required evidence very simple. The comparison with the time and effort required to search the old paper and email system to satisfy the auditors was striking, to say the least. Similar benefits are expected when it comes to the next Ofsted inspection.

St. Swithun's also use the GVO for storing and maintaining their school policies. This is another feature that Clerks like Sue find especially helpful. Problems finding policies, or being certain you have the definitive version, no longer exist. The system also alerts the Clerk 60 days before a policy is due for review so the Chair can be advised.

Sue has no doubt the GVO has changed her life – and St Swithun's - for the better. "Because it is so much easier, I spend less time on the mundane clerical (small c) work and have more time to spend on doing the real Clerk's work. Governors now see me much less as the person pushing the paper and emails around, reacting to requests. They see me much more as a proactive member

of the team. I have the time now to help the governors perform their roles by putting plans and information into the GVO in a way that makes them better informed. So they can be more effective in their role."

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For Sue, the effect of GVO at St Swithun's is clear: "I now know where everything is, it is so much easier to find information, and governors can find information for themselves. They are much better informed, not just about events concerning their own sub-committees, but in the others as well.

It has made my job so much easier and more satisfying. It is helping me perform my true role as Clerk to the Governors as opposed to clerk."

Sue Edwards would be happy to answer questions about St Swithun's School Governors' Virtual Office. She can be contacted by email at [sue.edwards771@btinternet.com](mailto:sue.edwards771@btinternet.com).

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