



Education

Pain-free payroll for the team at PACT



Customer Story



The Prince Albert Community Trust (PACT) is a multi-academy trust consisting of seven primary schools and one secondary school, established in September 2015 in Birmingham. After facing challenges with their previous payroll provider, PACT eased the burden on their overworked payroll team by switching to IRIS Payroll Services.

Highlights

- Industry expertise and seamless integration with school-specific needs
- Optimised processes and reduced administrative burden
- Flexible, empathetic, and solution-focused support from IRIS





// The push to progress

When Nicola Johnson, the Director of People and Culture at PACT, joined the Trust, she found the payroll team overwhelmed: ***“I came into the Trust and saw an incredibly overwhelmed team who were trying to keep a system up to date for no apparent reason – it was just a database. Whenever we had to make any changes to payroll, it was literally putting information into a spreadsheet and sending it across, very early in the month. With payday on the 28th, they would send information over by the 7th, and bulk uploads had to be completed by the 3rd.”*** At the time, PACT had a separate Management Information System (MIS) for HR, and they were using the local authority for payroll. As Nicola admits, ***“The two just didn’t speak to each other.”***

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The city council, which was PACT's payroll provider, was also talking about removing their provision for academies. ***"There were a lot of things wrong,"*** Nicola tells us, ***"But there was a huge fear for changing payroll because people got paid and they didn't see the amount of work and stress behind the scenes."***

When the local authority decided to increase prices for academies, it gave the Trust the final push to find a better system.





Easing the overload with IRIS Payroll Services

When PACT began its search for a new payroll provider, one of the key drivers in choosing IRIS Payroll Services was its strong reputation in the industry. ***"It had a really good reputation and was well liked by other schools and academies. Our Finance Director was very keen to speak to IRIS because he had heard good things through other finance directors,"*** says Nicola. After meeting with multiple providers, IRIS Payroll Services stood out for several reasons. ***"We chose IRIS Payroll Services because of the reporting, their links with pensions, which we didn't have with other providers, and the people we'd be working with."***

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Another major factor was IRIS Payroll Services' familiarity with the specific needs of schools, especially around terms like The Burgundy Book and the Green Book. ***"We didn't have to explain all those acronyms like we would with a commercial provider. In many ways, it felt like talking to a local authority,"*** notes Nicola. The specialism in local government and teacher pension schemes, combined with the understanding of term dates, was also crucial: ***"That specialism and knowledge was really key in why we moved with IRIS Payroll Services."*** Nicola also highlights the administrative relief PACT now experiences, stating, ***"The level of work and admin that we are now not doing because we've got one system is a breath of fresh air."***





Improved payroll, increased efficiency

The transition to IRIS Payroll Services has brought numerous benefits to PACT, significantly improving efficiency and accuracy. ***“There’s none of these emails floating around or people getting paid incorrectly,”*** says Nicola, highlighting how the system has streamlined payroll processes. Overtime and expenses are now managed on a single platform with automatic data transfer, ensuring all expense claims are paid without issue.. ***“When sick pay changes, we get alerted, and that also alerts the team at IRIS Payroll Services, so there’s no delay,”*** adds Nicola.





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The flexibility of cut-off dates also allows PACT to make changes up until the middle of the month, enabling them to onboard new employees as late as the 15th or 16th and still ensure they're paid within the same month. ***"Previously, employees would have to wait six weeks for payment,"*** says Nicola. The Trust can now set up future payroll changes in advance, such as when staff are moving between schools, which is particularly useful at the end of terms. ***"We can be prepared and organised for those end-of-term changes, which is really useful to have in place."*** The system has also simplified the distribution of P45s, eliminating the long delays that occurred with the previous provider: ***"P45s are now available straight away, and payslips are in employees' inboxes by lunchtime on payday – something we never had before."***



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A partnership built on support, empathy, and flexibility

The relationship between PACT and IRIS Payroll Services team has been marked by flexibility, support, and a genuine sense of partnership. ***“IRIS is incredibly flexible if we want any changes. We receive the first version of the reports through, and any changes we need are always handled – I’ve never been refused by the team. Even when it’s our fault, when we’ve missed something, there’s never any complaints. We don’t feel like we’re bothering the team or being a nuisance. It feels very much like we’re in a partnership.”*** says Nicola.



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Nicola recalls a particularly memorable moment early in their partnership when she forgot to authorise payroll:

“The first month I didn’t realise I had to push a button to actually get people paid, and your team phoned me in a panic. They weren’t going to let us make mistakes!”

Despite the late hour and Nicola being stuck in traffic, the IRIS team went above and beyond: ***“The guy on the phone said, ‘I will stay here until you get home, so you can authorise that pay.’ This was so early in our working relationship, and I just knew we had picked the right provider.”***

She appreciates that, rather than feeling criticised, she was met with empathy and support. ***“There’s never been a ‘Who’s fault is it?’ It’s always been ‘Let’s fix it so that everyone can be paid.’”***

This supportive approach continues throughout their partnership, with the team always focused on finding solutions.

“I would highly recommend IRIS Payroll Services, both the product and the team behind it are fantastic.”

IRIS Payroll Services is a smarter payroll
and pensions solution for schools and trusts:

To find out more, [click here](#).

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